Jane Cable

George Barr McCutcheon

Merry Christmas

To Papa from

Mary + William +

JANE CABLE

OTHER BOOKS BY
MR. McCUTCHEON

NEDRA
BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK
THE DAY OF THE DOG
THE PURPLE PARASOL
THE SHERRODS
GRAUSTARK
CASTLE CRANEYCROW
BREWSTER'S MILLIONS
JANE CABLE
COWARDICE COURT

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JANE CABLE

BY

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

Author of
"Beverly of Graustark"
"Nedra," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY
HARRISON FISHER

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JANE CABLE

CHAPTER I

WHEN JANE GOES DRIVING

It was a bright, clear afternoon in the late fall that pretty Miss Cable drove up in her trap and waited at the curb for her father to come forth from his office in one of Chicago's tallest buildings. The crisp, caressing wind that came up the street from the lake put the pink into her smooth cheeks, but it did not disturb the brown hair that crowned her head. Well-groomed and graceful, she sat straight and sure upon the box, her gloved hand grasping the yellow reins firmly and confidently. Miss Cable looked neither to right nor to left, but at the tips of her thoroughbred's ears. Slender and tall and very aristocratic she appeared, her profile alone visible to the passers-by.

After a very few moments, waiting in her trap, the smart young woman became impatient. A severe, little pucker settled upon her brow, and not once, but many times her eyes turned to the broad entrance across the sidewalk. She had telephoned to her father earlier in the afternoon; and he had promised faithfully to be ready at four o'clock for a spin up the drive behind Spartan. At three minutes past four the

pucker made its first appearance; and now, several minutes later, it was quite distressing. Never before had he kept her waiting like this. She was conscious of the fact that at least a hundred men had stared at her in the longest ten minutes she had ever known. From the bottom of a very hot heart she was beginning to resent this scrutiny, when a tall young fellow swung around a near-by corner, and came up with a smile so full of delight, that the dainty pucker left her brow, as the shadow flees from the sunshine. His hat was off and poised gallantly above his head, his right hand reaching up to clasp the warm, little tan one outstretched to meet it.

"I knew it was you long before I saw you," said he warmly.

"Truly? How interesting!" she responded, with equal warmth. "Something psychic in the atmosphere today?"

"Oh, no," he said, reluctantly releasing her hand. "I can't see through these huge buildings, you know—it's impossible to look over their tops—I simply knew you were here, that's all."

"You're romantic, even though you are a bit silly," she cried gaily. "Pray, how could you know?"

"Simplest thing in the world. Rigby told me he had seen you, and that you seemed to be in a great rage. He dared me to venture into your presence, and—that's why I'm here."

"What a hopelessly, commonplace explanation! Why did you not leave me to think that there was really something psychic about it? Logic is so discourag-

ing to one's conceit. I'm in a very disagreeable humour to-day," she said, in fine despair.

"I don't believe it," he disputed graciously.

"But I am," she insisted, smiling brightly. His heart was leaping high—so high, that it filled his eyes. "Everything has gone wrong with me to-day. It's pretty trying to have to wait in front of a big office building for fifteen minutes. Every instant, I expect a policeman to come up and order me to move on. Don't they arrest people for blocking the street?"

"Yes, and put them in awful, rat-swarming dungeons over in Dearborn Avenue. Poor Mr. Cable, he should be made to suffer severely for his wretched conduct. The idea of——"

"Don't you dare to say anything mean about dad," she warned.

"But he's the cause of all the trouble—he's never done anything to make you happy, or——"

"Stop!—I take it all back—I'm in a perfectly adorable humour. It was dreadfully mean of me to be half-angry with him, wasn't it? He's in there, now, working his dear old brain to pieces, and I'm out here with no brain at all," she said ruefully.

To the ingenuous youth, such an appeal to his gallantry was well-nigh irresistible, and for a moment it seemed as if he would yield to the temptation to essay a brilliant contradiction; but his wits came to his rescue, for quickly realising that not only were the frowning rocks of offence to be avoided, but likewise the danger of floundering helplessly about in the inviting quicksands of inanity, he preserved silence—wise young

man that he was, and trusted to his eyes to express an eloquent refutation. At last, however, something seemed to occur to him. A smile broke on his face.

"You had a stupid time last night?" he hazarded.

"What makes you think so?"

"I know who took you in to dinner."

The eyes of the girl narrowed slightly at the corners.

"Did he tell you?"

"No, I have neither seen nor heard from anyone present." She opened her eyes wide, now.

"Well, Mr. S. Holmes, who was it?"

"That imbecile, Medford."

Miss Cable sat up very straight in the trap; her little chin went up in the air; she even went so far as to make a pretence of curbing the impatience of her horse.

"Mr. Medford was most entertaining—he was the life of the dinner," she returned somewhat severely.

"He's a professional!"

"An actor!" she cried incredulously.

"No, a professional diner-out. Wasn't that rich young Jackson there?"

"Why, yes; but do tell me how you knew?" The girl was softening a little, her curiosity aroused.

"Of course I will," he said boyishly, at once pleased with himself and his sympathetic audience. "About five-thirty I happened to be in the club. Medford was there, and as usual catering to Jackson, when the latter was called to the 'phone. Naturally, I put two and two together." He paused to more thoroughly enjoy the look of utter mystification that hovered on the girl's

countenance. It was very apparent that this method of deduction through addition was unsatisfying. "What Jackson said to Medford, on his return," the young man continued, "I did not hear; but from the expression on the listener's face I could have wagered that an invitation had been extended and accepted. Oh, we boys have got it down fine! Garrison is——"

"And who is Garrison?"

"Garrison is the head door man at the club. It's positively amazing the number of telephone calls he receives every afternoon from well-known society women!"

"What about? And what's that got to do with Mr. Medford taking me in to dinner?"

"Just this: Suppose Mrs. Rowden——"

"Mrs. Rowden!" The girl was nonplussed.

"Yes—wants to find out who's in the club? She 'phones Garrison. Instantly, after ascertaining which set—younger or older is wanted, from a small card upon which he has written a few but choice names of club members, he submits a name to her."

"Really, you don't mean to tell me that such a thing is actually done?" exclaimed Miss Cable, who as yet was socially so unsophisticated as to be horrified; "you're joking, of course!"

"But nine time out of ten," ignoring the interruption; "it is met with: 'Don't want him!' Another: 'Makes a bad combination!' A third: 'Oh, no, my dear, not a dollar to his name—hopelessly ineligible!' This last exclamation though intended solely for the visitor at her home, elicits from Garrison a low chuckle

of approval of the speaker's discrimination; and presently, he hears: 'Goodness me, Garrison, there must be someone else!' Then, to her delight, she is informed that Mr. Jackson has just come in; and he is requested to come to the 'phone, Garrison being dismissed with thanks and the expectation of seeing her butler in the morning."

"How perfectly delicious!" came from the girl. "I can almost hear Mrs. Rowden telling Jackson that he will be the dearest boy in the world if he will dine with her."

"And bring someone with him, as she is one man short," laughed Graydon, as he wound up lightly; "and here is where the professional comes in. We're all onto Medford! Why, Garrison has half a dozen requests a night—six times five—thirty dollars. Not bad—but then the man's a 'who's who' that never makes mistakes. I won't be positive that he does not draw pay from both ends. For, men like Medford, outside of the club, probably tip him to give them the preference. It would be good business."

There was so much self-satisfaction in the speaker's manner of uttering these last words, that it would not have required the wisdom of one older than Miss Cable to detect that he was thoroughly enjoying his pose of man of the world. He was indeed young! For, he had yet to learn that not to disillusion the girl, but to conform as much as possible to her ideals, was the surest way to win her favour; and his vanity surely would have received a blow had not David Cable at that moment come out of the doorway across the

"'I KNEW IT WAS YOU LONG BEFORE I SAW YOU'"

sidewalk, pausing for a moment to converse with the man who accompanied him. The girl's face lighted with pleasure and relief; but the young man regarding uneasily the countenance of the General Manager of the Pacific, Lakes & Atlantic R. R. Company, saw that he was white, tired and drawn. It was not the keen, alert expression that had been the admiration of everyone; something vital seemed to be missing, although he could not have told what it was. A flame seemed to have died somewhere in his face, leaving behind a faint suggestion of ashes; and through the young man's brain there flashed the remark of his fair companion: 'He's in there now, working his dear, old brain to pieces.'

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Jane," said Cable, crossing to the curb. "Hello, Graydon; how are you?" His voice was sharp, crisp, and louder than the occasion seemed to demand, but it was natural with him. Years of life in an engine cab do not serve to mellow the tone of the human voice, and the habit is too strong to be overcome. There was no polish to the tones as they issued from David Cable's lips. He spoke with more than ordinary regard for the Queen's English, but it was because he never had neglected it. It was characteristic of the man to do a thing as nearly right as he knew how in the beginning, and to do it the same way until a better method presented itself.

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Cable, except that Jane has been abusing me because you were not here to——"

"Don't you believe a word he says, dad," she cried.

"Oh, if the truth isn't in me, I'll subside," laughed

Graydon. "Nevertheless, you've kept her waiting, and it's only reasonable that she should abuse somebody."

"I am glad you were here to receive it; it saves my grey hairs."

"Rubbish!" was Miss Cable's simple comment, as her father took his place beside her.

"Oh, please drive on, Jane," said the young man, his admiring eyes on the girl who grasped the reins afresh and straightened like a soldier for inspection. "I must run around to the University Club and watch the score of the Yale-Harvard game at Cambridge. It looks like Harvard, hang it all! Great game, they say——"

"There he goes on football. We must be off, or it will be dark before we get away from him. Good-bye!" cried Miss Cable.

"How's your father, Gray? He wasn't feeling the best in the world, yesterday," said Cable, tucking in the robe.

"A case of liver, Mr. Cable; he's all right to-day. Good-bye!"

As Jane and her father whirled away, the latter gave utterance to a remark that brought a new brightness to her eyes and a proud throbbing to her heart; but he did not observe the effect.

"Bright, clever chap—that Graydon Bansemer," he said comfortably.

CHAPTER II

THE CABLES

The General Manager of the Pacific, Lakes & Atlantic Railroad System had had a hard struggle of it. He who begins his career with a shovel in a locomotive cab usually has something of that sort to look back upon. There are no roses along the pathway he has traversed. In the end, perhaps, he wonders if it has been worth while. David Cable was a General Manager; he had been a fireman. It had required twenty-five years of hard work on his part to break through the chrysalis. Packed away in a chest upstairs in his house there was a grimy, greasy, unwholesome suit of once-blue overalls. The garments were just as old as his railroad career, for he had worn them on his first trip with the shovel. When his wife implored him to throw away the "detestable things," he said, with characteristic humour, that he thought he would keep them for a rainy day. It was much simpler to go from General Manager to fireman than *vice versa*, and it might be that he would need the suit again. It pleased him to hear his wife sniff contemptuously.

David Cable had been a wayward, venturesome youth. His father and mother had built their hopes high with him as a foundation, and he had proved a decidedly insecure basis; for one night, in the winter of 1863,

he stole away from his home in New York; before spring he was fighting in the far Southland, a boy of sixteen carrying a musket in the service of his country.

At the close of the Civil War Private Cable, barely eighteen, returned to his home only to find that death had destroyed its happiness: his father had died, leaving his widowed mother a dependant upon him. It was then, philosophically, he realised that labour alone could win for him; and he stuck to it with rigid integrity. In turn, he became brakeman and fireman; finally his determination and faithfulness won him a fireman's place on one of the fast New York Central "runs." If ever he was dissatisfied with the work, no one was the wiser.

Railroading in those days was not what it is in these advanced times. Then, it meant that one was possessed of all the evil habits that fall to the lot of man. David Cable was more or less contaminated by contact with his rough, ribald companions of the rail, and he glided moderately into the bad habits of his kind. He drank and "gamboled" with the rest of the boys; but by nature not being vicious and low, the influences were not hopelessly deadening to the better qualities of his character. To his mother, he was always the strong, good-hearted, manly boy, better than all the other sons in the world. She believed in him; he worshipped her; and it was not until he was well up in the twenties that he stopped to think that she was not the only good woman in the world who deserved respect.

Up in Albany lived the Widow Coleman and her two pretty daughters. Mrs. Coleman's husband died on the battlefield, and she, like many women in the North and the South, after years of moderate prosperity, was compelled to support herself and her family. She had been a pretty woman, and one readily could see where her daughters got their personal attractiveness. Not many doors from the boisterous little eating-house in which the railroad men snatched their meals as they went through, the widow opened a book and newsstand. Her home was on the floor above the stand, and it was there she brought her little girls to womanhood. Good-looking, harum-scarum Dave Cable saw Frances Coleman one evening as he dropped in to purchase a newspaper. It was at the end of June, in 1876, and the country was in the throes of excitement over the first news of the Custer massacre on the Little Big Horn River.

Cable was deeply interested, for he had seen Custer fighting at the front in the sixties. Frances Coleman, the prettiest girl he had ever seen, sold him the newspaper. After that, he seldom went through Albany without visiting the little book shop.

Tempestuous, even arrogant in love, Cable, once convinced that he cared for her, lost no time in claiming her, whether or no. In less than three months after the Custer massacre they were married.

Defeated rivals unanimously and enviously observed that the handsomest fireman on the road had conquered the most outrageous little coquette between New York and Buffalo. As a matter of fact, she had loved him

from the start; the others served as thorns with which she delightedly pricked his heart into subjection.

The young husband settled down, renounced all of his undesirable habits and became a new man with such surprising suddenness that his friends marvelled and—derided. A year of happiness followed. He grew accustomed to her frivolous ways, overlooked her merry whimsicalities and gave her the "full length of a free rope," as he called it. He was contented and consequently careless. She chafed under the indifference, and in her resentment believed the worst of him. Turmoil succeeded peace and contentment, and in the end, David Cable, driven to distraction, weakly abandoned the domestic battlefield and fled to the Far West, giving up home, good wages, and all for the sake of freedom, such as it was. He ignored her letters and entreaties, but in all those months that he was away from her he never ceased to regret the impulse that had defeated him. Nevertheless, he could not make up his mind to go back and resume the life of torture her jealousy had begotten.

Then, the unexpected happened. A letter was received containing the command to come home and care for his wife and baby. At once, David Cable called a halt in his demoralising career and saw the situation plainly. He forgot that she had "nagged" him to the point where endurance rebelled; he forgot everything but the fact that he cared for her in spite of all. Sobered and conscience-stricken, he knew only that she was alone and toiling; that she had suffered uncomplainingly until the babe was some months old before ap-

pealing to him for help. In abject humiliation, he hastened back to New York, reproaching himself every mile of the way. Had he but known the true situation, he would have been spared the pangs of remorse, and this narrative never would have been written.

CHAPTER III

JAMES BANSEMER

In the City of New York there was practising, at that time, a lawyer by the name of Bansemer. His office, on the topmost floor of a dingy building in the lower section of the city, was not inviting. On leaving the elevator, one wound about through narrow halls and finally peered, with more or less uncertainty and misgiving, at the half-obliterated sign which said that James Bansemer held forth on the other side of the glass panel.

It was whispered in certain circles and openly avowed in others that Bansemer's business was not the kind which elevates the law; in plain words, his methods were construed to debase the good and honest statutes of the land. Once inside the door of his office—and a heavy spring always closed it behind one—there was quick evidence that the lawyer lamentably disregarded the virtues of prosperity, no matter how they had been courted and won. Although his transactions in and out of the courts of that great city bore the mark of dishonour, he was known to have made money during the ten years of his career as a member of the bar. Possibly he kept his office shabby and unclean that it might be in touch with the transactions which had their morbid birth inside the grimy walls. There was no spot or corner in the two small rooms that comprised his

" chambers " to which he could point with pride. The floors were littered with papers; the walls were greasy and bedecked with malodorous notations, documents and pictures; the windows were smoky and useless; the clerk's desk bore every suggestion of dissoluteness.

But little less appalling to one's æsthetic sense was the clerk himself. Squatting behind his wretched desk, Elias Droom peered across the litter of papers and books with snaky but polite eyes, almost as inviting as the spider who, with wily but insidious decorum, draws the guileless into his web.

If one passed muster in the estimation of the incomprehensible Droom, he was permitted, in due season, to pass through a second oppressive-looking door and into the private office of Mr. James Bansemer, attorney-at-law and solicitor. It may be remarked at this early stage that, no matter how long or how well one may have known Droom, one seldom lingered to engage in commonplaces with him. His was the most repellent personality imaginable. When he smiled, one was conscious of a shock to the nervous system; when he so far forgot himself as to laugh aloud, there was a distinct illustration of the word " crunching "; when he spoke, one was almost sorry that he had ears.

Bansemer knew but little of this freakish individual's history; no one else had the temerity to inquire into his past—or to separate it from his future, for that matter. Once, Bansemer ironically asked him why he had never married. It was a full minute before the other lifted his eyes from the sheet of legal cap, and by that time he was in full control of his passion.

"Look at me! Would any woman marry a thing like me?"

This was said with such terrible earnestness that Bansemer took care never to broach the subject again. He saw that Droom's heart was not all steel and brass.

Droom was middle-aged. His lank body and cadaverous face were constructed on principles not generally accredited to nature as it applies to men. When erect, his body swayed as if it were a stubborn reed determined to maintain its dignity in the face of the wind; he did not walk, he glided. His long square chin, rarely clean-shaven, protruded far beyond its natural orbit; indeed, the attitude of the chin gave one an insight to the greedy character of the man. At first glance, one felt that Droom was reaching forth with his lower jaw to give greeting with his teeth, instead of his hand.

His neck was long and thin, and his turndown collar was at least two sizes too large. The nose was hooked and of abnormal length, the tip coming well down over the short, upper lip and broad mouth. His eyes were light blue, and so intense that he was never known to blink the lashes. Topping them were deep, wavering, black eyebrows that met above the nose, forming an ominous, cloudy line across the base of his thin, high forehead. The crown of his head, covered by long, scant strands of black hair, was of the type known as "retreating and pointed." The forehead ran upward and back from the brows almost to a point, and down from the pinnacle hung the veil of hair, just as if he had draped it there with the same care he might have

used in placing his best hat upon a peg. His back was stooped, and the high, narrow shoulders were hunched forward eagerly. Long arms and ridiculously thin legs, with big hands and feet, tell the story of his extremities. When he was on his feet Droom was more than six feet tall; as he sat in the low-backed, office chair he looked to be less than five feet, over all. What became of that lank expanse of bone and cuticle when he sat down was one of the mysteries that not even James Bansemer could fathom.

The men had been classmates in an obscure law school down in Pennsylvania. Bansemer was good-looking, forceful and young; while Droom was distinctly his opposite. Where he came from no one knew and no one cared. He was past thirty-five when he entered the school—at least twelve years the senior of Bansemer.

His appearance and attire proclaimed him to be from the country; but his sophistry, his knowledge of the world and his wonderful insight into human nature contradicted his looks immeasureably. A conflict or two convinced his fellow students that he was more than a match for them in stealth and cunning, if not in dress and deportment.

Elias Droom had not succeeded as a lawyer. He repelled people, growing more and more bitter against the world as his struggles became harder. What little money he had accumulated—Heaven alone knew how he came by it—dwindled to nothing, and he was in actual squalor when, later, Bansemer found him in an attic in Baltimore. Even as he engaged the half-

starved wretch to become his confidential clerk the lawyer shuddered and almost repented of his action.

But Elias Droom was worth his weight in gold to James Bansemer from that day forth. His employer's sole aim in life was to get rich and thereby to achieve power. His ambition was laudable, if one accepts the creed of morals, but his methods were not so praiseworthy. After a year of two of starvation struggles to get on with the legitimate, he packed up his scruples and laid them away—temporarily, he said. He resorted to sharp practice, knavery, and all the forms of legal blackmail; it was not long before his bank account began to swell. His business thrived. He was so clever that not one of his shady proceedings reacted. It is safe to venture that ninety-nine per cent. of the people who were bilked through his manipulations promised, in the heat of virtuous wrath, to expose him, but he had learned to smile in security. He knew that exposure for him meant humiliation for the instigator, and he continued to rest easy while he worked hard.

"You're getting rich at this sort of thing," observed Droom one day, after the lawyer had closed a particularly nauseous deal to his own satisfaction, "but what are you going to do when the tide turns?"

Bansemer, irritated on perceiving that the other was engaged in his exasperating habit of rubbing his hands together, did not answer, but merely thundered out: "Will you stop that!"

There was a faint suggestion of the possibility of a transition of the hands to claws, as Droom abruptly desisted, but smilingly went on:

"Some day, the other shark will get the better of you and you'll have nothing to fall back on. You've been building on mighty slim foundations. There isn't a sign of support if the worst comes to the worst," he chuckled.

"It's a large world, Droom," said his employer easily.

"And small also, according to another saying, "supplemented Droom. "When a man's down, everybody kicks him—I'm afraid you could not survive the kicking."

Droom grinned so diabolically as again he resumed the rubbing of his hands that the other turned away with an oath and closed the door to the inside office. Bansemer was alone and where Droom's eyes could not see him, but something told him that the grin hung outside the door for many minutes, as if waiting for a chance to pop in and tantalise him.

Bansemer was a good-looking man of the coarser mould—the kind of man that merits a second look in passing, and the second look is not always in his favour. He was thirty-five years of age, but looked older. His face was hard and deeply marked with the lines of intensity. The black eyes were fascinating in their brilliancy, but there was a cruel, savage light in their depths. The nose and mouth were clean-cut and pitiless in their very symmetry. Shortly after leaving college to hang out his shingle, he had married the daughter of a minister. For two years her sweet influence kept his efforts along the righteous path, but he writhed beneath the yoke of poverty. His pride

suffered because he was unable to provide her with more of the luxuries of life; in his selfish way, he loved her. Failure to advance made him surly and ill-tempered, despite her amiable efforts to lighten the shadows around their little home. When the baby boy was born to them, and she suffered more and more from the unkindness of privation, James Bansemer, by nature an aggressor, threw off restraint and plunged into the traffic that soon made him infamously successful. She died, however, before the taint of his duplicity touched her, and he, even in his grief, felt thankful that she never was to know the truth.

At this time Bansemer lived in comfort at one of the middle-class boarding houses uptown, and the boy was just leaving the kindergarten for a private school. Bansemer's calloused heart had one tender chamber, and in it dwelt the little lad with the fair hair and grey eyes of the woman who had died.

Late one November afternoon just before Bansemer put on his light topcoat to leave the office for the day, Droom tapped on the glass panel of the door to his private office. Usually, the clerk communicated with him by signal—a floor button by which he could acquaint his master with much that he ought to know, and the visitor in the outer office would be none the wiser. The occasions were rare when he went so far as to tap on the door. Bansemer was puzzled, and stealthily listened for sounds from the other side. Suddenly, there came to his ears the voices of women, mingled with Droom's suppressed but always raucous tones.

Bansemer opened the door; looking into the outer office, he saw Droom swaying before two women, rubbing his hands and smiling. One of the women carried a small babe in her arms. Neither she nor her companion seemed quite at ease in the presence of the lank guardian of the outer office.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOUNDLING

"LADY to see you!" announced Droom. The shrewd, fearless genius of the inner room glanced up quickly and met the prolonged, uncanny gaze of his clerk; unwillingly, his eyes fell.

"Confound it, Lias! will you ever quit looking at me like that! There's something positively creepy in that stare of yours!"

"Lady to see you!" repeated the clerk, shifting about uneasily, and then gliding away to take his customary look at the long row of books in the wall cases. He had performed this act a dozen times a day for more than five years; the habit had become so strong that chains could not have restrained him. It was what he considered a graceful way of dropping out of notice, at the same time giving the impression that he was constantly busy.

"Are you Mr. Bansemer?" asked the woman with the babe in her arms, as he crossed into the outer office.

For a moment Bansemer purposely remained absorbed in the contemplation of his finger nails; then he shot a sudden comprehensive glance which took in the young woman, her burden and all the supposed conditions. There was no doubt in his mind that here was another

"paternity case," as he catalogued them in his big, black book.

"I am," he replied shortly, for he usually made short, quick work of such cases. There was not much money in them at best. They spring from the lower and poorer classes. The rich ones who are at fault in such matters never permit them to go to the point where a lawyer is consulted. "Would you mind coming in to-morrow? I'm just leaving for the day."

"It will take but a few minutes, sir, and it would be very hard for me to get away again to-morrow," said the young woman nervously. "I'm a governess in a family 'way uptown and my days are not very free."

"Is this your baby?" asked Bansemer, more interested. The word governess appealed to him; it meant that she had to do with wealthy people, at least.

"No—that is—well, not exactly," she replied confusedly. The lawyer looked at her so sharply that she flinched under his gaze. A kidnapper, thought he, with the quick cunning of one who deals in stratagems. Instinctively he looked about as if to make sure that there were no unnecessary witnesses to share the secret.

"Come into this room," said he suddenly. "Both of you. See that we are not disturbed," he added, to Droom. "I think I can give you a few minutes, madam, and perhaps some very good advice. Be seated," he went on, closing the door after them. His eyes rested on Droom's face for an instant as the door closed, and he saw a particularly irritating grin struggling on his thin lips. "Now, what is it? Be as brief as possible, please. I'm in quite a hurry."

It occurred to him at this juncture that the young woman was not particularly distressed. Instead, her rather pretty face was full of eagerness and there was a certain lightness in her manner that puzzled him for the moment. Her companion was the older of the two and quite as prepossessing. Both were neatly dressed and both looked as though they were or had been bread-winners. If they had a secret, it was now quite evident to this shrewd, quick thinker that it was not a dark one. In truth, he was beginning to feel that something mischievous lurked in the attitude of the two visitors.

"I want to ask how a person has to proceed to adopt a baby," was the blunt and surprising remark that came from the one who held the infant. Bansemer felt himself getting angry.

"Who wants to adopt it?" he asked shortly.

"I do, of course," she answered, so readily that the lawyer stared. He scanned her from head to foot, critically; her face reddened perceptibly. It surprised him to find that she was more than merely good-looking; she was positively attractive!

"Are you a married woman?" he demanded.

"Yes," she answered, with a furtive glance at her companion. "This is my sister," she added.

"I see. Where is your husband?"

"He is at home—or rather, at his mother's home. We are living there now."

"I thought you said you were a governess?"

"That doesn't prevent me from having a home, does it?" she explained easily. "I'm not a nurse, you know."

"This isn't your child, then?" he asked impatiently.

"I don't know whose child it is." There was a new softness in her voice that made him look hard at her while she passed a hand tenderly over the sleeping babe. "She comes from a foundling's home, sir."

"You cannot adopt a child unless supported by some authority," he said. "How does she happen to be in your possession; and what papers have you from the foundling's home to show that the authorities are willing that you should have her? There is a lot of red tape about such matters, madam."

"I thought perhaps you could manage it for me, Mr. Bansemer," she said, plaintively. "They say you never fail at anything you undertake." He was not sure there was a compliment in her remark, so he treated it with indifference.

"I'm afraid I can't help you." The tone was final.

"Can't you tell me how I'll have to proceed? I must adopt the child, sir, one way or another." Her manner was more subdued and there was a touch of supplication in her voice.

"Oh, you go into the proper court and make application, that's all," he volunteered carelessly. "The judge will do the rest. Does your husband approve of the plans?"

"He doesn't know anything about it?"

"What's that?"

"I can't tell him; it would spoil everything."

"My dear madam, I don't believe I understand you quite clearly. You want to adopt the child and keep the matter dark so far as your husband is concerned?

May I inquire the reason?" Bansemer, naturally, was interested by this time.

"If you have time to listen, I'd like to tell you how it all comes about. It won't take long. I want someone to tell me just what to do and I'll pay for the advice, if it isn't too expensive. I'm very poor, Mr. Bansemer; perhaps you won't care to help me after you know that I can't afford to pay very much."

"We'll see about that later," he said brusquely; "go ahead with the story."

The young woman hesitated, glanced nervously at her sister as if for support, and finally faced the expectant lawyer with a flash of determination in her dark eyes. As she proceeded, Bansemer silently and somewhat disdainfully made a study of the speaker. He concluded that she was scarcely of common origin and was the possessor of a superficial education that had been enlarged by conceitedness; furthermore, she was a person of selfish instincts, but without the usual cruel impulses. There was little if any sign of true refinement in the features, and yet, there was a strange strength of purpose that puzzled him. As her story progressed, he solved the puzzle. She had the strength to carry out a purpose that might further her own personal interests; but not the will to endure sacrifice for the sake of another. Her sister was larger and possessed a reserve that might have been mistaken for deepness. He felt that she was hardly in sympathy with the motives of the younger, more volatile woman.

"My husband is a railroad engineer and is ten years older than I," the narrator said in the beginning. "I

wasn't quite nineteen when we were married—two years ago. For some time, we got along all right; then we began to quarrel. He commenced to——"

"Mr. Bansemer is in a hurry, Fan," broke in the older sister, sharply; and then, repeating the lawyer's words: "Be as brief as possible."

There was a world of reproach in the look which greeted the speaker. Evidently, it was a grievous disappointment not to be allowed to linger over the details.

"Well," she continued half pettishly; "it all ended by his leaving home, job and everything. I had told him that I was going to apply for a divorce. For three months I never heard from him."

"Did you apply for a divorce?" asked the lawyer, stifling a yawn.

"No, sir, I did not, although he did nothing towards my support." The woman could not resist a slightly coquettish attempt to enlist Bansemer's sympathy. "I obtained work at St. Luke's Hospital for Foundlings, and after that, as a governess. But, once a week I went back to the asylum to see the little ones. One day, they brought in a beautifully dressed baby—a girl. She was found on a doorstep, and in the basket was a note asking that she be well cared for; with it, was a hundred dollar bill. The moment I saw the little thing, I fell in love with her. I made application and they gave me the child with the understanding that I was to adopt it. You see, I was lonely—I had been living alone for nine or ten months. The authorities knew nothing of my trouble with Mr. Cable—that's my hus-

band, David Cable. The child was about a month old when I took her to his mother, whom I hadn't seen in months. I told Mrs. Cable that she was mine. The dear old lady believed me; half the battle was won." She paused out of breath, her face full of excitement.

"And then?" he asked, once more interested.

"We both wrote to David asking him to come home to his wife and baby." She looked away guiltily. For a full minute, Bansemer did not speak.

"The result?" he demanded.

"He came back last month."

"Does he know the truth?"

"No, and with God's help, he never shall! It's my only salvation!" she exclaimed emotionally. He thinks she is his baby and—and——" The tears were on her cheeks, now. "I worship him, Mr. Bansemer! Oh, how good and sweet he has been to me since he came back! Now, don't you see why I must adopt this child, and why he must never know? If he learned that I had deceived him in this way, he would hate me to my dying day."

The infant was awake and staring at him with wide, blue eyes.

"And you want me to handle this matter so that your husband will be none the wiser?"

"Oh, Mr. Bansemer," she cried; "it means everything to me! All depends on this baby. I must adopt her, or the asylum people won't let me keep her. Can't it be done so quickly that he'll never find it out?"

"How many people know that the child is not yours?"

"My sister and the authorities at the asylum; not another soul."

"It is possible to arrange the adoption, Mrs. Cable, but I can't guarantee that Mr. Cable will not find it out. The records will show the fact, you know. There is but one way to avoid discovery."

"And that, please?"

"Leave New York and make your home in some distant city. That's the safe way. If you remain here, there is always a chance that he may find out. I see the position you're in and I'll help you. It can be done quite regularly and there is only one thing you'll have to fear—you own tongue," he concluded, pointedly.

"I hate New York, Mr. Bansemer. David likes the West and I'll go anywhere on earth, if it will keep him from finding out. Oh, if you knew how he adores her!" she cried, regret and ecstasy mingling in her voice. "I'd give my soul if she were only mine!" Bansemer's heart was too roughly calloused to be touched by the wistful longing in these words.

Before the end of the week the adoption of the foundling babe was a matter of record; and the unsuspecting David Cable was awaiting a reply from the trainmaster of a big Western railroad, to whom, at the earnest, even eager, solicitation of his wife, he had applied for work. Elias Droom made a note of the fee in the daybook at the office, but asked no questions. Bansemer had told him nothing of the transaction, but he was confident that the unspeakable Droom knew all about it, even though he had not been nearer than the outer office during any of the consultations.

CHAPTER V

THE BANSEMER CRASH

TWENTY long years had passed since David and Frances Cable took their hasty departure—virtually fleeing from New York City, their migrations finally ending in that thriving Western city—Denver. Then, the grime of the engine was on Cable's hands and deep beneath his skin; the roar of iron and steel and the rush of wind was ever in his ears; the quest of danger in his eye; but there was love, pride and a new ambition in his heart. Now, in 1898, David Cable's hands were white and strong; the grime was gone; the engineer's cap had given way to the silk tile of the magnate; and the shovel was a memory.

But his case was not unique in that day and age of pluck and luck. Many another man had gone from the bottom to the top with the speed and security of the elevator car in the lofty "sky-scrapers." In the heartless revolution of a few years, he became the successor of his Western benefactor. The turn that had been kind to him, was unkind to his friend and predecessor; the path that led upward for David Cable, ran the other way for the train-master, who years afterward died in his greasy overalls and the close-fitting cap of an engineer. One night Cable read the news of the wreck with all the joy gone from his heart.

From the cheap, squalid section of town known as

"railroad end," Cable's rising influence carried him to the well-earned luxury. The lines of care and toil mellowed in the face of his pretty wife, as the years rolled by; her comely figure shed the cheap raiment of "hard, old days," and took on the plumage of prosperity. Trouble, resentment, and worry disappeared as if by magic, smoothed out by the satiny touch of comfort's fingers. She went upward much faster than her husband, for her ambitions were less exacting. She longed to shine socially—he loathed the thought of it. But Cable was proud of his wife. He enjoyed the transition that lifted her up with steady strength to the plane which fitted her best—as he regarded it. She had stuck by him nobly and uncomplainingly through the vicissitudes; it delighted him to give her the pleasures.

Frances Cable was proud; but she had not been too proud to stand beside the man with the greasy overalls and to bend her fine, young strength to work in unison with his. Together, facing the task, cheerfully, they had battled and won.

There were days when it was hard to smile; but the next day always brought with it a fresh sign of hope. The rough, hard days in the Far West culminated in his elevation to the office of General Manager of the great railroad system, whose headquarters and home were in the city of Chicago. Attaining this high place two years prior to the opening of this narrative, he was regarded now as one of the brainiest railroad men and slated to be president of the road at the next meeting.

Barely past fifty years of age, David Cable was in the prime of life and usefulness. Age and prosperity had improved him greatly. The iron grey of his hair, the keen brightness of his face, the erect, and soldierly carriage of his person made him a striking figure. His wife, ten years his junior, was one of the most attractive women in Chicago. Her girlish beauty had refined under the blasts of adversity; years had not been unkind to her. In a way, she was the leader of a certain set, but her social ambitions were not content. There was a higher altitude in fashion's realm. Money, influence and perseverance were her allies; social despotism her only adversary.

The tall, beautiful and accomplished daughter of the Cables was worshipped by her father with all the warmth and ardour of his soul. Times there were when he looked in wonder upon this arbiter of not a few manly destinies; and for his life could not help asking himself how the Creator had given him such a being for a child, commenting on the fact that she bore resemblance to neither parent.

For years, Mrs. Cable had lived in no little terror of some day being found out. As the child grew to womanhood, the fears gradually diminished and a sense of security that would not be disturbed replaced them. Then, just as she was reaching out for the chief prizes of her ambition, she came face to face with a man, whose visage she never had forgotten—Elias Droom! And Frances Cable looked again into the old and terrifying shadows!

It was late in the afternoon, and she was crossing the

sidewalk to her carriage waiting near Field's, when a man brushed against her. She was conscious of a strange oppressiveness. Before she turned to look at him she knew that a pair of staring eyes were upon her face. Something seemed to have closed relentlessly upon her heart.

One glance was sufficient. The tall, angular form stood almost over her; the two, wide, blue eyes looked down in feigned surprise; the never-to-be-forgotten voice greeted her, hoarsely:

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Cable! And how is the baby?"

"The baby!" she faltered. Struggle against it as she would, a sort of fascination drew her gaze toward the remarkable face of the old clerk. "Why—why—she's very well, thank you," she finally stammered. Her face was as white as a ghost; with a shudder she started to pass him. Droom, blocked the way.

"She was such a pretty little thing, I remember;" and then, insinuatingly: "Where is her father, now?"

"He—Mr. Cable," answered Mrs. Cable, feeling very much as a bird feels when it is charmed by a snake, "why, he's at home, of course."

"Indeed!" was all that Elias Droom said; for she had fled to escape the grin that writhed in and out among the wrinkles of his face.

As her carriage struggled through crowded Washington Street, an irresistible something compelled Frances Cable to glance back. Droom stood on the curb, his eyes following her almost hungrily. Half an hour later, when she reached home, she was in a state of

collapse. Although there was no physical proof of the fact, she was positive that Elias Droom had followed her to the very doorstep.

In suspense and dread, she waited for days before there was a second manifestation of Droom. There was rarely a day when she did not expect her husband to stand before her and ask her to explain the story that had been carried to him by a demon in the form of man.

But Droom did not go to David Cable. He went to James Bansemer with the news.

James Bansemer's law and loan offices were not far from the river and, it is sufficient to say, not much farther from State Street. He who knows Chicago well cannot miss the location more than three blocks, either way, if he takes City Hall as a focal point. The office building in which they were located is not a pretentious structure, but its tenants were then and still are regarded as desirable. It may be well to announce that Bansemer, on reaching Chicago, was clever enough to turn over a new leaf and begin work on a clear, white page, but it is scarcely necessary to add that the black, besmirched lines on the opposite side of the sheet could be traced through every entry that went down on the fresh white surface. Bansemer was just as nefarious in his transactions, but he was a thousandfold more cautious. Droom sarcastically reminded him that he had a reputation to protect, in his new field and, besides, as his son was "going in society" through the influence of a coterie of Yale men, it would be worse than criminal to deteriorate.

Bansemer loathed Droom, but he also feared him. He was the only living creature that inspired fear in the heart of this bold schemer. It is true that he feared the effect an exposure might have on the mind of his stalwart son, the boy with his mother's eyes; but he had succeeded so well in blinding the youth in the years gone by, that the prospects of discovery now seemed too remote for concern. The erstwhile New York "shark" was now an eel, wily and elusive, but he was an eel with a shark's teeth and a shark's voraciousness. He had grown old in the study of this particular branch of natural history. Bansemer was fifty-five years old in this year of 1898. He was thinner than in the old New York days, but the bull-like vigour had given way to the wiry strength of the leopard. The once black hair was almost white, and grew low and thick on his forehead. Immaculately dressed, ever straight and aggressive in carriage, he soon became a figure of whom all eyes took notice, even in the most crowded of Chicago thoroughfares.

Graydon Bansemer, on leaving Yale with a diploma and some of the honours of his class, urged his father to take him into his office, and ultimately to make him a partner in the business. James Bansemer never forgot the malicious grin that crossed the face of Elias Droom when the young fellow made the proposition not more than a fortnight before the Bansemer establishment picked itself up and hastily deserted New York. That grin spoke plainer than all the words in language. Take him into the office? Make this honest, grey-eyed boy a partner? It was no wonder that

Droom grinned and it is no wonder that he forgot to cover his mouth with his huge hand, as was his custom.

The proposition, while sincere and earnest, was too impossible for words. For once in his life, James Bansemer was at a loss for subterfuge. He stammered, flushed and writhed in the effort to show the young man that the step would be unprofitable, and he was sorely conscious that he had not convinced the eager applicant. He even urged him to abandon the thought of becoming a lawyer, and was ably seconded by Elias Droom, whose opinion of the law, as he had come to know it, was far from flattering.

Just at this time Bansemer was engaged in the most daring as well as the most prodigious "deal" of his long career. With luck, it was bound to enrich him to the extent of $50,000. The plans had been so well prepared and the execution had been so faultless that there seemed to be no possibility of failure. To take his fair-minded son—with the mother's eyes—into the game would be suicidal. The young fellow would turn from him forever. Bansemer never went so far as to wonder whence came the honest blood in the boy's veins, nor to speculate on the origin of the unquestioned integrity. He had but to recall the woman who bore him, the woman whose love was the only good thing he ever knew, the wife he had worshipped while he sinned.

For years and years he had plied his unwholesome trade in reputations, sometimes evading exposure by the narrowest of margins, and he had come to believe that he was secure for all time to come. But it was the "big job" that brought disaster. Just when it looked

as though success was assured, the crash came. He barely had time to cover his tracks, throw the figurative pepper into the eyes of his enemies, and get away from the scene of danger. But, he had been clever and resourceful enough to avoid the penalty that looked inevitable and came off with colours trailing but uncaptured.

Perhaps no other man could have escaped; but James Bansemer was cleverest when in a corner. He backed away, held them at bay until he could recover his breath, and then defied them to their teeth. Despite their proof, he baffled them, and virtue was not its own reward—at least in this instance.

In leaving New York, he hoped that Elias Droom—who knew too much—might refuse to go into the new territory with him, but the gaunt, old clerk took an unnatural and malevolent delight in clinging to his employer. He declined to give up his place in the office, and, although he hated James Bansemer, he came like an accusing shadow into the new offices near the Chicago River, and there he toiled, grinned and scowled with the same old faithfulness.

CHAPTER VI

IN SIGHT OF THE FANGS

At first, it was hard for James Bansemer to believe that his henchman had not been mistaken. Droom's description of the lady certainly did not correspond to what his memory recalled. Investigation, however, assured him that the Cables in the mansion near the lake were the people he had known in New York. Bansemer took no one into his confidence, not even Droom. Once convinced that the erstwhile fireman was now the rich and powerful magnate, he set to work upon the machinery which was to extract personal gain from the secret in his possession. He soon learned that the child was a young woman of considerable standing in society, but there was no way for him to ascertain whether Frances Cable had told the truth to her husband in those dreary Far West days.

Bansemer was rich enough, but avarice had become a habit. The flight from New York had deprived him of but little in worldly goods. His ill-gotten gains came with him; and investments were just as easy and just as safe in Chicago as in New York. Now, he saw a chance to wring a handsome sum from the rich woman whose only possession had been love when he first knew her. If the secret of Jane's origin still remained locked up in her heart, the effort would be an easy one. He learned enough of David Cable, however, to know that

if he shared the secret, the plan would be profitless and dangerous.

It was this uncertainty that kept him from calling at the Cable home; likewise, from writing a note which might prove a most disastrous folly. Time and circumstance could be his only friends, and he was accustomed to the whims of both. He read of the dinners and entertainments given by the Cables, and smiled grimly. Time had worked wonders for them! Scandal, he knew, could undo all that ambition and pride had wrought. He could well afford to wait.

However, he did not have long to wait, for his opportunity came one night in Hooley's Theatre. Graydon and he occupied seats in the orchestra, near the stage and not far from the lower right-hand boxes. It was during the busy Christmas holidays, but the "star" was of sufficient consequence to pack the house. The audience was no end of a fashionable one. Time and again, some strange influence drew his gaze to the gay party in one of the lower boxes. The face of the woman nearest to him was not visible; but the two girls who sat forward, turned occasionally to look over the audience; and he saw that they were pretty, one exceptionally so. One of the men was grey-haired and strong-featured; the others were quite too insignificant to be of interest to him. The woman whose back he could see did not look out over the audience. Her indifference was so marked that it seemed deliberate.

At last, he felt that her eyes were upon him; he turned quickly. True enough, for with lips slightly parted, her whole attitude suggestive of intense restraint, Mrs.

Cable was staring helplessly into the eyes of the man who could destroy her with a word.

The one thing that flashed through Bansemer's brain was the realisation that she was far more beautiful than he had expected her to be. There was a truly aristocratic loveliness in the rather piquant face, and she undeniably possessed "manner." Maturity had improved her vastly, he confessed with strange exultation; age had been kinder than youth. He forgot the play, seldom taking his eyes from the back which again had been turned to him. Calculating, he reached the conclusion that she was not more than forty years of age. More than once he made some remark to his son, only to surprise that young man glancing surreptitiously at the face of the more beautiful of the two girls. Even in this early stage, James Bansemer began to gloat over the beauty of this new-found, old acquaintance.

In the lobby of the theatre, as they were leaving, he deliberately doffed his hat and extended a pleasant hand to the wife of David Cable. She turned deathly pale and there was a startled, piteous look in her eyes that convinced him beyond all shadow of a doubt. There was nothing for her to do but introduce him to her husband. Two minutes later Graydon Bansemer and Jane Cable, strangers until then, were asking each other how they liked the play, and Fate was at work.

A few weeks after this scene at the theatre young Mr. Bansemer dashed across the hall from the elevator and entered his father's office just as Elias Droom was closing up.

"Where's the governor, Mr. Droom?" he asked, deliberately brushing past the old clerk in the outer office.

"Left some time ago," replied Droom, somewhat ungraciously, his blue eyes staring past the young man with a steadiness that suggested reproach because he was out of the direct line of vision. "It is nearly six o'clock—he's never here after five."

"I know that he—I asked you if you knew of his whereabouts. Do you—or not?" The self-confident, athletic youth did not stand in physical awe of the clerk.

"No," was the simple and sufficient answer.

"Well then—I'm off," said Graydon a trifle less airily.

Droom's overcoat was on and buttoned up to his chin; his long feet were encased in rubbers of enormous size and uncertain age. There must have been no blood in the veins of this grim old man, for the weather was far from cold and the streets were surprisingly dry for Chicago.

"I am closing the office for the day," said Droom. For no apparent reason a smile spread over the lower part of his face and Graydon, bold as he was, turned his eyes away.

"I thought I'd stop in and pick up the governor for a ride home in my motor," said he, turning to the door.

"Yours is one of the first out here, I suppose," came from the thin lips of the old clerk.

Graydon laughed.

"Possibly. The company charges a nickel a ride—half a dime—Going down, sir?" Graydon had rung

for the elevator and was waiting in front of the grating.

A look containing a curious compound of affectionate reproach and a certain senile gratification at being made the object of the boy's condescending raillery crossed Droom's countenance. Without, however, answering his question, he slowly and carefully closed the door, tried it vigorously, and joined Bansemer at the shaft. With Droom, words were unnecessary when actions could speak for themselves.

"Still living over in Wells Street, Mr. Droom?" went on Graydon, thoroughly at home with the man whom he had feared and despised by stages from childhood up.

"It's good enough for me," said Droom shortly. "'Tisn't Michigan Avenue, the Drive or Lincoln Park Boulevard, but it's just as swell as I am—or ever hope to be."

"There's nothing against Wells Street but—it got ashamed of itself when it crossed the river."

"They call it Fifth Avenue," sneered Droom, "but it isn't *the* Avenue, is it?" Bansemer was surprised to note a tone of affectionate pride in the question.

"No indeed!"

"Oh, there's only one, Mr. Graydon," said the old clerk, quite warmly; "our own Fifth Avenue."

"I had no idea you cared so much for swagger things, Mr. Droom," observed the other, genuinely surprised.

"Even Broadway is heaven to me," said Droom, some of the rasp gone from his voice. "Good-bye; I go

this way," he said when they reached the sidewalk a little later. The young man watched his gaunt figure as it slouched away in the semi-darkness.

"By George, the old chap is actually homesick!" muttered he. "I didn't think it was in him."

Droom had rooms over a millinery shop in Wells Street. There was a bedroom at the back and a "living-room" in front, overlooking the street from the third story of the building. Of the bedchamber there is but little to say, except that it contained a bed, a washstand, a mirror, two straight-backed chairs and a clothes-press. Droom went out for his bath—every Saturday night. The "living-room," however, was queer in more ways than one. In one corner, on a chest of drawers, stood his oil stove, while in the opposite corner a big sheet-iron heater made itself conspicuous. Firewood was piled behind the stove winter and summer, Droom lamenting that one could not safely discriminate between the seasons in Chicago. The chest of drawers contained his stock of provisions, his cooking and table utensils, his medicine and a small assortment of carpenter's tools. He had no use for an icebox.

A bookcase, old enough to warm the heart of the most ardent antiquarian, held his small and unusual collection of books. Standing side by side, on the same shelf, were French romances, unexpurgated, and the Holy Bible, much bethumbed and pencilled. There were schoolbooks alongside of sentimental love tales, Greek lexicons and quaint old fairy stories, law books and works on criminology; books on botany, geology, anatomy, and physics. In all, perhaps, there were two

hundred volumes. A life of Napoleon revealed signs of almost constant usage. There were three portraits of the Corsican on the dingy green walls.

The strange character of the man was best shown by the pictures that adorned—or rather disfigured the walls. Vulgar photographs and prints were to be seen on all sides. Mingled with these cheap creations were excellent copies of famous Madonnas, quaint Scriptural drawings, engravings of the Saviour, and an allegorical coloured print which emphasised the joys of heaven. There was also a badly drawn but idealised portrait of Droom, done in crayon at the age of twenty. This portrait was one of his prized possessions. He loved it best because it was a bust and did not expose his longitudinal defects. If Droom ever had entertained a feminine visitor in his apartments, there is no record of the fact. But few men had seen the interior of his home, and they had gone away with distressed, perplexed sensibilities.

He cooked his own meals on the oil stove, and, alone, ate them from the little table that stood near the heater. Occasionally, he went out to a near-by eating house for a lonely feast. His rooms usually reeked with the odour of boiled coffee, burnt cabbage and grease, pungent chemicals and long-suffering bed linen. Of his "front" room, it may be said that it was kitchen, dining-room, parlour, library, workshop, laboratory and conservatory. Four flower-pots in which as many geraniums existed with difficulty, despite Droom's constant and unswerving care, occupied a conspicuous place on the window-sills overlooking the street. He watched

over them with all the tender solicitude of a lover, surprising as it may appear when one pauses to consider the vicious exterior of the man.

Droom was frugal. He was, in truth, a miser. If anyone had asked him what he expected to do with the money he was putting away in the bank, he could not have answered, calculating as he was by nature. He had no relative to whom he would leave it and he had no inclination to give up the habit of active employment. His salary was small, but he managed to save more than half of it—for a "rainy day," as he said. He did his reading and experimenting by kerosene light, and went to bed by candle light, saving a few pennies a week in that way. The windows in his apartment were washed not oftener than once a year. He was seldom obliged to look through them during the day, and their only duty at night was to provide ventilation—and even that was characteristically meagre.

He was a man of habit—not habits. A pipe at night was his only form of dissipation. It was not too far for him to walk home from the office of evenings, and he invariably did so unless the weather was extremely unpleasant. So methodical was he that he never had walked over any other bridge than the one in Wells Street, coming and going.

Past sixty-five years of age, Droom's hair still was black and snaky; his teeth were as yellow and jagged as they were in the seventies, and his eyes were as blue and ugly as ever. He had not aged with James Bansemer. In truth, he looked but little older then when we made his acquaintance. The outside world knew no

more of Droom's private transactions than it knew of Bansemer's. Up in the horrid little apartment in Wells Street the queer old man could do as he willed, unobserved and unannoyed. He could pursue his experiments with strange chemicals, he could construct odd devices with his kit of tools, and he could let off an endless amount of inventive energy that no one knew he possessed.

When he left Graydon Bansemer on the sidewalk in front of the office building, he swung off with his long strides towards the Wells Street bridge. His brain had laid aside everything that had occupied its attention during office hours and had given itself over to the project that hastened his steps homeward. His supper that night was a small one and hurriedly eaten in order that he might get to work on his new device. Droom grinned and cackled to himself all alone up there in the lamplight, for he was perfecting an " invention " by which the honest citizen could successfully put to rout the " hold-up " man that has made Chicago famous.

Elias Droom's inventive genius unfailingly led him toward devices that could inflict pain and discomfiture. His plan to get the better of the wretched, hard-working hold-up man was unique, if not entirely practical. He was constructing the models for two little bulbs, made of rubber and lined with a material that would resist the effects of an acid, no matter how powerful. On one end of each bulb, which was capable of holding at least an ounce of liquid, there was a thin syringe attachment, also proof against acids. These little bulbs

were made so that they could be held in the palm of the hand. By squeezing them suddenly a liquid could be shot from the tube with considerable force.

The bulbs were to contain vitriol.

When the hold-up man gave the command to "hold up your hands," the victim had only to squeeze the bulb as the hands went up, and, if accurately aimed, the miscreant would get the stream of the deadly vitriolic fluid in his eyes and—here endeth the first lesson. Experience alone could do the rest.

Young Bansemer hurried to their apartments on the North Side. He found his father dressed and ready to go out to dinner.

"Well, how was everything to-day?" asked James Bansemer from his easy chair in the library. Graydon threw his hat and gloves on the table.

"Terribly dull market, governor," he said. "It's been that way for a week. How are you feeling?"

"Fit to dine with a queen," answered the older man, with a smile. "How soon can you dress for dinner, Gray?"

"That depends on who is giving the dinner."

"Some people you like. I found the note here when I came in a little after five. We have an hour in which to get over there. Can you be ready?"

"Do you go security for the affair?" asked Graydon.

"Certainly. You have been there, my boy, and I've not heard you complain."

"You mean over at——"

"Yes, that's where I mean," said the other, breaking in quietly.

"I think I can be ready in ten minutes, father."

While he was dressing, his father sat alone and stared reflectively at the small blue gas blaze in the grate. A dark, grim smile unconsciously came over his face, the inspiration of a triumphant joy. Twice he read the dainty note that met him on his return from the office.

"What changes time can make in woman!" he mused; "and what changes a woman can make in time! For nearly a year I've waited for this note. I knew it would come—it was bound to come. Graydon has had everything up to this time, while I have waited patiently in the background. Now, it is my turn."

"All right, father," called Graydon from the hall. "The cab is at the door."

Together they went down the steps, arm in arm, strong figures.

"To Mr. David Cable's," ordered Bansemer, the father, complacently, as he stepped into the carriage after his son.

CHAPTER VII

MRS. CABLE ENTERTAINS

James Bansemer had not recklessly rushed into Mrs. Cable's presence with threats of exposure; but on the contrary, he had calmly, craftily waited. It suited his purpose to let her wonder, dread and finally develop the trust that her secret was safe with him. Occasionally, he had visited the Cable box in the theatre; not infrequently he had dined with them in the downtown cafés and at the homes of mutual acquaintances; but this was the first time that James Bansemer had enjoyed the hospitality of Frances Cable's home. His son, on the best of terms with their daughter, was a frequent visitor there.

There was a rare bump of progressiveness in the character of Graydon Bansemer. He was good-looking enough beyond doubt, and there was a vast degree of personal magnetism about him. It seemed but natural that he should readily establish himself as a friend and a favourite of the fair Miss Cable. For some time, James Bansemer had watched his son's progress with the Cable family, not once allowing his personal interest to manifest itself. It was but a question of time until Mrs. Cable's suspense and anxiety would bring her to him, one way or another. Every word that fell from the lips of his son regarding the

Cables held his attention, and it was not long before he saw the family history as clearly as though it were an open book—and he knew far more than the open book revealed.

Frances Cable was not deluded by his silence and aloofness; but she was unable to devise means to circumvent him. Constant fear of his power to crush lurked near her day and night. Conscious of her weakness, but eager to have done with the strife, sometimes she longed for the enemy to advance. At first, she distrusted and despised the son, but his very fairness battered down the barriers of prejudice, and real admiration succeeded. Her husband liked him immensely, and Jane was his ablest ally. David Cable regarded him as one of the brightest, young men on the Stock Exchange, and predicted that some day he would be an influential member of the great brokerage firm for which he now acted as confidential clerk. Mr. Clegg, the senior member of the firm of Clegg, Groll & Davidson, his employers, personally had commended young Bansemer to Cable, and he was properly impressed.

Graydon's devotion to Jane did not go unnoticed. This very condition should have assured Mrs. Cable that James Bansemer had kept her secret zealously. There was nothing to indicate that the young man knew the story of the foundling.

It was not until some weeks after the chance meeting in Hooley's Theatre that Mrs. Cable came into direct contact with James Bansemer's designs. She had met him at two or three formal affairs, but their conversations had been of the most conventional character; on

the other hand, her husband had lunched and dined at the club with the lawyer. At first, she dreaded the outcome of these meetings, but as Cable's attitude towards her remained unchanged, she began to realise that Bansemer, whatever his purpose, was loyal.

They met at last, quite informally, at Mrs. Clegg's dinner, a small and congenial affair. When the men came into the drawing-room, after the cigars, Mrs. Cable, with not a little trepidation, motioned to Mr. Bansemer to draw up his chair beside her.

"I have been looking forward with pleasure to this opportunity, Mr. Bansemer," she said, in a courteously acidulated way. "It has been so long in coming."

"Better late than never," he returned, with marked emphasis. Fortunately, for her, the challenging significance of his words was quickly nullified by the smile with which she was almost instantly favoured. "Twenty years, I believe—it certainly came very near being 'never,'" he went on, abruptly changing from harsh to the sweetest of tones. "No one could believe that you—you're simply wonderful!" and added, pointedly, "But your daughter is even more beautiful, if such is possible, than her—her mother."

Apparently, the innuendo passed unnoticed; in reality, it required all her courage to appear calm.

"How very nice of you," she said softly; and looking him full in the face: "Her mother thanks you for the compliment."

It was a brave little speech; such bravery would have softened a man of another mould—changed his purpose. Not so with Bansemer. A sinister gleam came

into his eyes and his attack became more brutally direct.

"But the husband—has he never mistrusted?"

The blow told, though her reply was given with rippling laughter and for the benefit of any chance listeners.

"For shame, Mr. Bansemer!" she cried lightly; "after flattering me so delightfully, you're surely not going to spoil it all?"

Despite his growing annoyance, admiration shone clearly from Bansemer's eyes. His memory carried him back some twenty years to the scene in his office. Was it possible, he was thinking, that the charming woman before him exercising so cleverly all the arts of society, as if born to the purple, and the light-headed, frivolous, little wife of the Central's engineer were one and the same person? The metamorphosis seemed incredible.

Unwittingly, his manner lost some of its aggressiveness; and the woman perceiving the altered conditions, quick to take advantage, resolved to learn, if possible his intentions. Presently, going right to the point, she asked:

"Is that extraordinary looking creature you had in your office still with you, Mr. Bansemer?"

"Extraordinary!" He laughed loudly. "He is certainly that, and more. Indeed, the English language does not supply us with an adjective that adequately describes the man."

The people nearest to them, by this time, had moved away to another part of the large drawing-room; prac-

tically, the couple were by themselves. She had been thinking, for a moment, reasoning with a woman's logic that it was always well to know one's enemy. When she next spoke, it was almost in a whisper.

"How much does that terrible man know?"

"He is not supposed to know anything;" and then, with an enigmatical smile, promptly admitted: "However, I'm afraid that he does."

"You have told him? And yet, you promised nobody should know. How could——"

"My dear Mrs. Cable, he was not told; if he has found out—I could not prevent his discovering the truth through his own efforts," he interrupted in a tone more assuaging than convincing to her; and then, hitching his chair closer, and lowering his voice a note, he continued: "The papers had to be taken out—but you must not worry about him—you can depend on me."

"Promise me that you will make him—I am so fearful of that awful——" she broke off abruptly. Her fears were proving too much for her, and she was in imminent danger of a complete breakdown; all the veneer with which she had bravely commenced the interview had disappeared.

Bansemer endeavoured to soothe her with promises; but the poor woman saw only his teeth in the reassuring smile that he presented to her, together with the warnings that they were likely to be observed. With the hardest kind of an effort, she succeeded in pulling herself together sufficiently to bid good-night to her hostess.

When Mrs. Cable reached home that night, it was

with a full realisation that she was irrevocably committed into the custody of these cold-blooded men.

They met again and again at the homes of mutual friends, and she had come to loathe the pressure of his hand when it clasped hers. The undeniable caress in his low, suggestive voice disturbed her; his manner was unmistakable. One night he held her hand long and firmly in his, and while she shrank helplessly before him he even tenderly asked why she had not invited him into her home. It was what she had expected and feared. Her cup of bitterness was filling rapidly—too rapidly. His invitation to dinner a fortnight later, followed.

. . . . .

Jane Cable was radiant as she entered the drawing-room shortly after the arrival of the two Bansemers.

"It's quite like a family party! How splendid!" she said to Graydon with a quick glance in the direction of James Bansemer and David Cable, who stood conversing together, and withdrawing her soft, white hand, which she had put forth to meet his in friendly clasp. "It's too good to be true!" she went on in a happy, spontaneous, almost confiding manner.

The two fathers looked on in amused silence, the one full of admiration and pride for the clean, vigorous manhood of his son awaiting to receive welcome from the adorable Jane; the other, long since conscious of the splendid beauty of his daughter, mentally declaring that she never had appeared so well as when standing beside this gallant figure.

Other guests arrived before Mrs. Cable made her

appearance in the drawing-room. She had taken more time than usual with her toilet. It was impossible for her to hide the fact that the strain was telling on her perceptibly. The face that looked back into her eyes from the mirror on her dressing-table was not the fresh, warm one that had needed so little care a few short months before. There was a heaviness about the eyes and there were strange, persistent lines gathering under the soft, white tissues of her skin. But when she at last stepped into the presence of her guests, with ample apologies for her tardiness, she was the picture of life and nerve. So much for the excellent resources of her will.

Bansemer was the last to present himself for her welcome, lingering in the background until the others had passed.

"I'm so glad you could come. Indeed, it's a pleasure to——" She spoke clearly and distinctly as she extended her hand; but as she looked squarely into his eyes she thought him the ugliest man she ever had seen. Every other woman in the party was saying to herself that James Bansemer was strikingly handsome.

"Most pleasures come late in life to some of us," he returned, gallantly, and even aydon Bansemer wished that he could have said it.

"Your father is a perfect dear," Jane said to him, softly. "It was not what he said just then that pleased me, but what he left unsaid."

"Father's no end of a good fellow, Jane. I'm glad you admire him."

"You are not a bit like him," she said reflectively.

"Thanks," he exclaimed. "You are not very flattering."

"But you are a different sort of a good fellow, that's what I mean. Don't be absurd," she cried in some little confusion.

"I'm like my mother, they say, though I don't remember her at all."

"Oh, how terrible it must be never to have known one's mother," said she tenderly.

"Or one's father," added James Bansemer, who was passing at that instant with Mrs. Cable. "Please include the father, Miss Cable," he pleaded with mock seriousness. Turning to Mrs. Cable, who had stopped beside him, he added: "You, the most charming of mothers, will defend the fathers, won't you?"

"With all my heart," she answered so steadily that he was surprised.

"I will include the father, Mr. Bansemer," said Jane, "if it is guaranteed that he possibly could be as nice and dear as one's mother. In that case, I think it would be—oh, dreadfully terrible never to have known him."

"And to think, Miss Cable, of the unfortunates who have known neither father nor mother," said Bansemer, senior, slowly, relentlessly. "How much they have missed of life and love!"

"That can be offset somewhat by the thought of the poor parents who never have known a son or a daughter," said Jane.

"How can they be parents, then?" demanded Bobby Rigby, coming up in time.

"Go away, Bobby," she said scornfully.

"That's a nice way to treat logic," he grumbled, ambling on in quest of Miss Clegg.

"The debate will become serious if you continue," said Mrs. Cable lightly. "Come along, Mr. Bansemer; Mrs. Craven is waiting."

When they were across the room and alone, she turned a white face to him and remonstrated bitterly: "Oh, that was cowardly of you after your promise to me!"

"I forgot myself," he said quietly. "Don't believe me to be utterly heartless." His hand touched her arm. Instantly her assumed calm gave way to her deep agitation, and with a swift change of manner, she turned on him, her passion alight.

"You——!" she stammered; then her fears found voice. "What do you mean?" she demanded in smothered, alarmed tones.

He desisted savagely and shrank away, the colour flaming into his disgusted, saturnine face. He did not speak to her again until he said good-bye long afterward.

As he had expected, his place at the dinner-table was some distance from hers. He was across the table from Jane and Graydon, and several seats removed from David Cable. He smiled grimly and knowingly when he saw that he had been cut off cleverly from the Cables.

"To-morrow night, then, Jane!" said Graydon at parting. No one was near enough to catch the tender eagerness in his voice, nor to see the happy flush in her cheek as she called after him:

"To-morrow night!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE TELEGRAM

Bobby Rigby and Graydon Bansemer were bosom friends in Chicago; they had been classmates at Yale. It had been a question of money with Bobby from the beginning. According to his own admission, his money was a source of great annoyance to him. He was not out of debt but once, and then, before he fully realised it. So unusual was the condition, that he could not sleep; the first thing he did in the morning was to borrow right and left for fear another attack of insomnia might interfere with his training for the football eleven.

Robertson Ray Rigby, immortalised as Bobby, had gone in for athletics, where he learned to think and act quickly. He was called one of the lightest, but headiest quarterbacks in the East. No gridiron idol ever escaped his "Jimmy," or "Toppy," or "Pop," or "Johnny." When finally, he hung out his shingle in Chicago: "Robertson R. Rigby, Attorney-at-Law," he lost his identity even among his classmates. It was weeks before the fact became generally known that it was Bobby who waited for clients behind the deceptive shingle.

The indulgent aunt who had supplied him with funds in college was rich in business blocks and apartment buildings; and now, Mr. Robertson R. Rigby was her man of affairs. When he went in for business, the old

push of the football field did not desert him. He was very much alive and very vigorous, and it did not take him long to "learn the signals."

With his aunt's unfaltering prosperity, his own ready wit and unbridled versatility, he was not long in establishing himself safely in his profession and in society. Everybody liked him, though no one took him seriously except when they came to transact business with him. Then, the wittiness of the drawing-room turned into shrewdness as it crossed the office threshold.

The day after the Cable dinner, Bobby yawned and stretched through his morning mail. He had slept but little the night before, and all on account of a certain, or rather, uncertain Miss Clegg. That petite and aggravating young woman had been especially exasperating at the Cable dinner. Mr. Rigby, superbly confident of his standing with her, encountered difficulties which put him very much out of temper. For the first time, there was an apparent rift in her constancy; never before had she shown such signs of fluctuating. He could not understand it—in fact, he dared not understand it. "She was a most annoying young person," said Mr. Rigby to himself wrathfully, more than once after he went to bed that night. Anyhow, he could not see what there was about Howard Medford for any girl to countenance, much less to admire. Mr. Medford certainly had ruined the Cable dinner-party for Mr. Rigby, and he was full of resentment.

"Miss Keating!" called Mr. Rigby for the third time; "may I interrupt your conversation with Mr.

Deever long enough to ask a question that has been on my mind for twenty minutes?"

Mr. Deever was the raw, young gentleman who read law in the office of Judge Smith, next door. Bobby maintained that if he read law at all, it was at night, for he was too busy with other occupations during the day.

Miss Keating, startled, turned roundabout promptly.

"Yes, sir," at last, came from the pert, young woman near the window.

"I guess I'll be going," said Mr. Deever resentfully, rising slowly from the side of her desk on which he had been lounging.

"Wait a minute, Eddie," protested Miss Keating; "what's your hurry?" and then, she almost snapped out: "What is it, Mr. Rigby?"

"I merely wanted to ask if you have sufficient time to let me dictate a few, short letters that ought to go out to-day," said Bobby, sarcastically; and then added with mock apology: "Don't move, Mr. Deever; if you're not in Miss Keating's way, you're certainly not in mine."

"A great josher!" that young woman was heard to comment, admiringly.

"You may wake up some morning to find that I'm not," said Bobby, soberly. Whereupon, Miss Keating rose and strode to the other end of the room and took her place beside Bobby's desk.

Bobby dictated half a dozen inconsequential letters before coming to the one which troubled him most. For many minutes he stared reflectively at the typewritten

message from New York. Miss Keating frowned severely and tapped her little foot somewhat impatiently on the floor; but Bobby would not be hurried. His reflections were too serious. This letter from New York had come with a force sufficient to drive out even the indignant thoughts concerning one Miss Clegg. For the life of him, Bobby Rigby could not immediately frame a reply to the startling missive. Eddie Deever stirred restlessly on the window ledge.

"Don't hurry, Eddie!" called Miss Keating, distinctly and insinuatingly.

"Oh, I guess I'll be going!" he called back, beginning to roll a cigarette. "I have some reading to do to-day." Mr. Deever was tall, awkward and homely, and a lot of other things that would have discouraged a less self-satisfied "lady's man." Judge Smith said he was hopeless, but that he might do better after he was twenty-one.

"What are you reading now, Eddie?" asked Miss Keating, complacently eyeing Mr. Rigby. "Raffles?"

"Law, you idiot!" said Eddie, scornfully, going out of the door.

"Oh! Well, the law is never in a hurry, don't you know? It's like justice—the slowest thing in town!" she called after him as his footsteps died away.

"Ready?" said Bobby, resolutely. "Take this, please; and slowly and carefully he proceeded to dictate:

"Mr. Denis Harbert,

"New York,

"Dear Denis: I cannot tell you how much your letter surprised me. What you say seems preposterous. There must be a mistake. It cannot be this man. I know him quite well, and

seems as straight as a string and a gentleman, too. His son, you know as well as I. There isn't a better fellow in the world! Mr. B. has a fairly good business here; his transactions open and aboveboard. I'm sure I have never heard a word said against him or his methods. You are mistaken, that's all there is about it.

"You might investigate a little further and, assuring yourself, do all in your power to check such stories as you relate. Of course, I'll do as you suggest; but I'm positive I can find nothing discreditable in his dealings here.

"Keep me posted on everything.

"As ever, yours,"

Miss Keating's anxiety was aroused. After a very long silence, she took the reins into her own hands. "Is Mr. Briggs in trouble?" she asked at a venture. Mr. Briggs was the only client she could think of, whose name began with a B.

"Briggs? What Briggs?" asked Bobby, relighting his pipe for the fourth time.

"Why, our Mr. Briggs," answered Miss Keating, curtly.

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Keating. Has he been around lately?"

"I thought you were referring to him in that letter," she said succinctly.

"Oh, dear me, no. Another party altogether, Miss Keating. Isn't the typewriter in working order this morning?" he asked, eyeing her machine innocently. She sniffed and started to reply, but thought better of it. Then she began pounding the keys briskly.

"It works like a charm," she shot back, genially.

The letter that caused Bobby such perturbation came in the morning mail. His friend had laid bare some of

the old stories concerning James Bansemer, and cautioned him not to become involved in transactions with the former New Yorker. Harbert's statements were positive in character, and he seemed to know his case thoroughly well. While the charges as they came to Rigby were general, Harbert had said that he was quite ready to be specific.

All day long, the letter hung like a cloud over young Mr. Rigby. He was to have lunched with Graydon, and was much relieved when young Bansemer telephoned that he could not join him. Rigby found himself in a very uncomfortable position. If the stories from New York were true, even though he knew none of the inside facts, Graydon's father was pretty much of a scalawag, to say the least. He was not well acquainted with the lawyer, but he now recalled that he never had liked the man. Bansemer had impressed him from the beginning as heartless, designing, utterly unlike his clean-hearted son.

Bobby loved Graydon Bansemer in the way that one man loves a true friend. He was certain that the son knew nothing of those shady transactions—if they really existed as Harbert painted them—but an exposure of the father would be a blow from which he could not recover.

It came at last to Rigby that he was not the only one in Chicago who held the secret. Other members of the bar had been warned long before the news came to him, and it was morally certain that if the facts were as bad as intimated, the police also were in possession of them.

At the same time, Rigby felt a certain moral responsibility involving himself. Bansemer, at any time, might apply his methods to people who were near and dear to him. The new intimacy with the Cables came to Bobby's mind. And then, there were Clegg, Groll, the Semesons and others who might easily fall into the snare if James Bansemer set it for them.

Appreciating his responsibility in the matter, now that he was prepared to hear the worst of James Bansemer, Rigby's heart stood almost still. It meant that some day he might have to expose Graydon Bansemer's father; it meant that he might have to cruelly hurt his friend; it meant that he might lose a friendship that had been one of his best treasures since the good, old college days. The mere fact that he would be compelled to watch and mistrust James Bansemer seemed like darkest treachery to Graydon, even though the son should not become aware of the situation. Later, in the afternoon, Bobby went, guiltily, into a telegraph office and sent away a carefully worded dispatch. The answer came to him at the club, that evening, while he played billiards with young Bansemer, who, even then was eager to be off to keep the promised appointment with pretty Miss Cable.

The telegram which he opened while Graydon impatiently chalked his cue and waited for him to play was brief and convincing. It read:

"Watch him, by all means. He is not safe, my word for it. There is no mistake."

CHAPTER IX

THE PROPOSAL

The little room off the library was Jane's "den." Her father had a better name for it. He called it her "web," but only in secret conference. Graydon Bansemer lounged there in blissful contemplation of a roseate fate, all the more enjoyable because his very ease was the counterpoise of doubt and uncertainty. No word of love had passed between the mistress of the web and her loyal victim; but eyes and blood had translated the mysterious, voiceless language of the heart into the simplest of sentences. They loved and they knew it.

After leaving Rigby at the club Graydon drove to the North Side, thrilled to the marrow with the prophecies of the night. His heart was in that little room off the library—and had been there for months. It was the abode of his thoughts. The stars out above the cold, glittering lake danced merrily for him as he whirled up the Drive; the white carpet of February crinkled and creaked with the chill of the air, but his heart was hot and safe and sure. He knew that she knew what he was coming for that night. The first kiss!

Jane's face was warm, her eyes had the tender glow of joy expectant, her voice was soft with the promise of coming surrender. Their hands met and clasped as she stood to welcome him in the red, seductive dim-

ness of the little throne room. His tall frame quivered; his lean, powerful, young face betrayed the hunger of his heart; his voice turned husky. It was not as he had planned. Her beauty—her mere presence—swept him past the preliminary fears and doubts. His handclasp tightened and his face drew resistlessly to hers. Then their hands went suddenly cold.

"You know, don't you, Jane, darling?" he murmured.

"Yes," she answered after a moment, softly, securely. He crushed her in his strong arms; all the world seemed to have closed in about her. Her eyes, suffused with happiness, looked sweetly into his until she closed them with the coming of the first kiss. "I love you—oh, I love you!" she whispered.

"I worship you, Jane!" he responded. "I have always worshipped you!"

It was all so natural, so normal. The love that had been silent from the first had spoken, that was all—had put into words its untold story.

"Jane, I am the proudest being in the world!" he said, neither knew how long afterward, for neither thought of time. They were sitting on the couch in the corner, their turbulent hearts at rest. "To think, after all, that such a beautiful being as you can be mine forever! It's—why, it's inconceivable!"

"You were sure of me all the time, Graydon," she remonstrated. "I tried to hide it, but I couldn't. You must have thought me a perfect fool all these months."

"You are very much mistaken, if you please. You *did* hide it so successfully at times, that I was sick with uncertainty."

"Well, it's all over now," she smiled, and he sighed with a great relief.

"All over but the—the wedding," he said.

"Oh, that's a long way off. Let's not worry over that, Graydon."

"A long way off? Nonsense! I won't wait."

"Won't?"

"I should have said can't. Let's see; this is February. March, dearest?"

"Graydon, you are so much younger than I thought. A girl simply cannot be hurried through a—an engagement. Next winter."

"Next what? That's nearly a year, Jane. It's absurd! *I'm* ready."

"I know. It's mighty noble of you, too. But I just *can't*, dearest. No one ever does."

"Don't—don't you think I'm prepared to take care of you?" he said, straightening up a bit.

She looked at his strong figure and into his earnest eyes and laughed, so adorably, that his resentment was only passing.

"I can't give you a home like this," he explained; "but you know I'll give you the best I have all my life."

"You can't help succeeding, Graydon," she said earnestly. "Everyone says that of you. I'm not afraid. I'm not thinking of that. It isn't the house I care for. It's the home. You *must* let me choose the day."

"I suppose it's customary," he said at last. "June is the month for brides, let me remind you."

"Before you came this evening I had decided on January next, but now I am willing to——"

"Oh, you decided before I came, eh?" laughingly.

"Certainly," she said unblushingly. "Just as you had decided on the early spring. But, listen, dear, I am willing to say September of this year."

"One, two, three—seven months. They seem like years, Jane. You *won't* say June?"

"Please, please let me have some of the perquisites," she pleaded. "It hasn't seemed at all like a proposal. I've really been cheated of that, you must remember, dear. Let me say, at least, as they all do, that I'll give you an answer in three days."

"Granted. I'll admit it wasn't the sort of proposal one reads about in novels——"

"But it was precisely as they are in real life, I'm sure. No one has a stereotyped proposal any more. The men always take it for granted and begin planning things before a girl can say no."

"Ah, I see it has happened to you," he said, jealous at once.

"Well, isn't that the way men do nowadays?" she demanded.

"A fellow has to feel reasonably sure, I dare say, before he takes a chance. No one wants to be refused, you know," he admitted. "Oh, by the way, I brought this—er—this ring up with me, Jane."

"You darling!" she cried, as the ring slipped down over her finger. And then, for the next hour, they planned and the future seemed a thousand-fold brighter than the present, glorious as it was.

"You can't help succeeding," she repeated, "the same as your father has. Isn't he wonderful? Oh, Graydon, I'm so proud of you!" she cried, enthusiastically.

"I can never be the man that the governor is," said Graydon, loyally. "I couldn't be as big as father if I lived to be a hundred and twenty-six. He's the best ever! He's done everything for me, Jane," the son went on, warmly. "Why, he even left dear, old New York and came to Chicago for my sake, dear. It's the place for a young man, he says; and he gave up a great practice so that we might be here together. Of course, *he* could succeed anywhere. Wasn't it bully of him to come to Chicago just—just for me?"

"Yes. Oh, if you'll only be as good-looking as he is when you are fifty-five," she said, so plaintively that he laughed aloud. "You'll probably be very fat and very bald by that time."

"And very healthy, if that can make it seem more horrible to you," he added. For some time he sat pondering while she stared reflectively into the fire opposite. Then squaring his shoulders as if preparing for a trying task, he announced firmly: "I suppose I'd just as well see your father to-night, dearest. He likes me, I'm sure, and I—I don't think he'll refuse to let me have you. Do you?"

"My dad's just as fair as yours, Gray," she said with a smile. "He's upstairs in his den. I'll go to mother. I know she'll be happy—oh, so happy."

Bansemer found David Cable in his room upstairs—his smoking and thinking room, as he called it.

"Come in, Graydon; don't stop to knock. How are

you? Cigarette? Take a cigar, then. Bad night outside, isn't it?"

"Is it? I hadn't—er—noticed," said Graydon, dropping into a chair and nervously nipping the end from a cigar. "Have you been downtown?"

"Yes. Just got in a few minutes ago. The road expects to do a lot of work West this year, and I've been talking with the ways and means gentlemen—a polite and parliamentary way to put it."

"I suppose we'll all be congratulating you after the annual election, Mr. Cable."

"Oh, that's just talk, my boy. Winemann is the logical man for president. But where is Jane?"

"She's—ah—downstairs, I think," said the tall young man, puffing vigorously. "I came up—er—to see you about Jane, Mr. Cable. I have asked her to be my wife, sir."

For a full minute the keen eyes of the older man, sharpened by strife and experience, looked straight into the earnest grey eyes of the young man who now stood across the room with his hand on the mantlepiece. Cable's cigar was held poised in his fingers, halfway to his lips. Graydon Bansemer felt that the man aged a year in that brief moment.

"You know, Graydon, I love Jane myself," said Cable at last, arising slowly. His voice shook.

"I know, Mr. Cable. She is everything to you. And yet I have come to ask you to give her to me."

"It isn't that I have not suspected—aye, known—what the outcome would be," said the other mechanically. "She will marry, I know. It is right that she

should. It is right that she should marry you, my boy. You—you *do* love her?" He asked the question almost fiercely.

"With all my soul, Mr. Cable. She loves me. I don't know how to convince you that my whole life will be given to her happiness. I am sure I can——"

"I know. It's all right, my boy. It—it costs a good deal to let her go, but I'd rather give her to you than to any man I've ever known. I believe in you."

"Thank you, Mr. Cable," said Graydon Bansemer. Two strong hands clasped each other and there was no mistaking the integrity of the grasp.

"But this is a matter in which Jane's mother is far more deeply concerned than I," added the older man. "She likes you, my boy—I know that to be true, but we must both abide by her wishes. If she has not retired——"

"Jane is with her, Mr. Cable. She knows by this time."

"She is coming." Mrs. Cable's light footsteps were heard crossing the hall, and an instant later Bansemer was holding open the den door for her to enter. He had a fleeting glimpse of Jane as that tall young woman turned down the stairway.

Frances Cable's face was white and drawn, and her eyes were wet. Her husband started forward as she extended her hand to him. He clasped them in his own and looked down into her face with the deepest tenderness and wistfulness in his own. Her body swayed suddenly and his expression changed to one of surprise and alarm.

"Don't—don't mind, dear," he said hoarsely. "It had to come. Sit down, do. There! Good Lord, Frances, if you cry now I'll—I'll go all to smash!" He sat down abruptly on the arm of the big leather chair into which she had sunk limply. Something seemed to choke him and his fingers went nervously to his collar. Before them stood the straight, strong figure of the man who was to have Jane forever.

Neither of them—nor Jane—knew what Frances Cable had suffered during the last hour. She accidentally had heard the words which passed between the lovers in the den downstairs. She was prepared when Jane came to her with the news later on, but that preparation had cost her more than any of them ever could know.

Lying back in a chair, after she had almost crept to her room, she stared white-faced and frightened at the ceiling until it became peopled with her wretched thoughts. All along she had seen what was coming. The end was inevitable. Love as it grew for them had known no regard for her misery. She could not have prevented its growth; she could not now frustrate its culmination. And yet, as she sat there and stared into the past and the future, she knew that it was left for her to drink of the cup which they were filling—the cup of their joy and of her bitterness.

Fear of exposure at the hand of Graydon Bansemer's father had kept her purposely blind to the inevitable. Her woman's intuition long since had convinced her that Graydon was not like his father. She knew him to be honourable, noble, fair and worthy. Long and often had she wondered at James Bansemer's design in per-

mitting his son to go to the extreme point in relation with Jane. As she sat there and suffered, it came to her that the man perhaps had a purpose after all—an unfathomable, selfish design which none could forestall. She knew him for all that he was. In that knowledge she felt a slight, timid sense of power. He stood for honour, so far as his son was concerned. In fair play, she could expose him if he sought to expose her.

But all conjectures, all fears, paled into insignificance with the one great terror: what would James Bansemer do in the end? What would he do at the last minute to prevent the marriage of his son and this probable child of love? What was to be his tribute to the final scene in the drama?

She knew that he was tightening his obnoxious coils about her all the time. Even now she could feel his hand upon her arm, could hear his sibilant whisper, could see his intense eyes full of suggestion and threat. Now she found herself face to face with the crisis of all these years. Her only hope lay in the thought that neither could afford the scandal of an open declaration. Bansemer was merciless and he was no fool.

Knowing Graydon to be the son of a scoundrel, she could, under ordinary circumstances, have forbidden her daughter to marry him. In this instance she could not say him nay. The venom of James Bansemer in that event would have no measure of pity. In her heart, she prayed that death might come to her aid in the destruction of James Bansemer.

It was not until she heard Graydon coming up the

stairs that the solution flashed into her brain. If Jane became the wife of this cherished son, James Bansemer's power was gone! His lips would be sealed forever. She laughed aloud in the frenzy of hope. She laughed to think what a fool she would have been to forbid the marriage. The marriage? Her salvation! Jane found her almost hysterical, trembling like a leaf. She was obliged to confess that she had heard part of their conversation below, in order to account for her manner. When Jane confided to her that she had promised to marry Graydon in September—or June—she urged her to avoid a long engagement. She could say no more than that.

Now she sat limp before the two men, a wan smile straying from one to the other, exhausted by her suppressed emotions. Suddenly, without a word, she held out her hand to Graydon. In her deepest soul, she loved this manly, strong-hearted young fellow. She knew, after all, he was worthy of the best woman in the land.

"You know?" cried Graydon, clasping her hand, his eyes glistening. "Jane has told you? And you—you think me worthy?"

"Yes, Graydon—you are worthy." She looked long into his eyes, searching for a trace of the malevolence that glowed in those of his father. They were fair and honest and sweet, and she smiled to herself. She wondered what his mother had been like.

"Then I may have her?" he cried. She looked up at her husband and he nodded his head.

"Our little girl," he murmured. It all came back to

her like a flash. Her deception, her imposition, her years of stealth—and she shuddered. Her hand trembled and her eyes grew wide with repugnance as they turned again upon Graydon Bansemer. Both men drew back in amazement.

"Oh, no—it cannot, cannot be!" she moaned, without taking her eyes from Graydon's face. In the same instant she recovered herself and craved his pardon. "I am distressed—it is so hard to give her up, Graydon," she panted, smiling again. The thought had come suddenly to her that James Bansemer had a very strong purpose in letting his son marry Jane Cable. She never had ceased to believe that Bansemer knew the parents of the child she had adopted. It had dawned upon her in the flash of that moment that the marriage might mean a great deal to this calculating father. "David, won't you leave us for a few minutes? There is something I want to say to Graydon."

David Cable hesitated for an instant and then slowly left the room, closing the door behind him. He was strangely puzzled over that momentary exposition of emotion on the part of his wife. He was a man of the world, and he knew its vices from the dregs up, but it was many days before the startling suspicion struck in to explain her uncalled-for display of feeling. It did not strike in until after he noticed that James Bansemer was paying marked attention to his wife.

Left alone with Graydon, Mrs. Cable nervously hurried to the point. She was determined to satisfy herself that the son did not share her secret with his father.

"Does your father know that you want to marry Jane?" she asked.

"Of course—er—I mean, he suspects, Mrs. Cable. He has teased me not a little, you know. I'm going to tell him to-night."

"He has not known Jane very long, you know."

"Long enough to admire her above all others. He has often told me that she is the finest girl he's ever met. Oh, I'm sure father will be pleased, Mrs. Cable."

"I met your father in New York, of course—years ago. I presume he has told you."

"I think not. Oh, yes, I believe he did tell me after we met you at Hooley's that night. He had never seen Mr. Cable."

"Nor Jane, I dare say."

"Oh, no. I knew Jane long before dad ever laid eyes on her." The look in his eyes satisfied her over all that he knew nothing more.

"You love her enough to sacrifice anything on earth for her?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes, Mrs. Cable," he answered simply.

"You would renounce all else in the world for her sake?"

"I believe that's part of the service," he said, with a smile. "Jane is worth all of that, and more. She shall be first in my heart, in my mind, for all time, if that is what you mean, Mrs. Cable. Believe me, I mean that."

"Mr. Bansemer says that you are like your mother," she mused, wistfully.

"That's why he loves me, he also says. I'm sorry

I'm not like father," he said earnestly. "He's great!" She turned her face away so that he might not see the look in her eyes. "I think Jane is like——" he paused in confusion. "Like her father," he concluded. She arose abruptly and took his hand in hers.

"Go to her, Graydon," she said. "Tell her that Mr. Cable and I want you to be our son. Good-night and God bless you." She preceded him to the stairway and again shook hands with him. David Cable was ascending.

"Graydon," said the latter, pausing halfway up as the other came down, "you were ready to congratulate me in advance on the prospect of becoming president of the P., L. & A. Do you know that I was once an ordinary fireman?"

"Certainly, Mr. Cable. The rise of David Cable is known to everyone."

"That's all. I just wanted to be sure. Jane was not born with a silver spoon, you know."

"And yet she is Jane Cable," said the young man proudly. Then he hurried on down to the expectant, throbbing Jane.

Frances Cable sat at her escritoire for an hour, her brain working with feverish energy. She was seeking out the right step to take in advance of James Bansemer. Her husband sat alone in his den and smoked long after she had taken her step and retired to rest —but not to sleep. On her desk lay half a dozen invitations, two of them from the exclusive set to whose inner circles her ambitious, vigorous aspirations were forcing her. She pushed them aside and with nar-

rowed eyes wrote to James Bansemer—wrote the note of the diplomat who seeks to forestall:

"Dear Mr. Bansemer: Doubtless Graydon will have told you his good news before this reaches you, but Mr. Cable and I feel that we cannot permit the hour to pass without assuring you of our own happiness and of our complete approval. Will you dine with us this evening—*en famille*—at seven-thirty?

"Frances Cable."

David Cable read the note and sent it early the next morning by special messenger to James Bansemer. The engagement of Jane Cable and Graydon Bansemer was announced in the evening papers.

CHAPTER X

THE FOUR INITIALS

The offices of James Bansemer were two floors above those of Robertson Ray Rigby in the U—— Building. The morning after Graydon Bansemer's important visit to the home of the Cables, Eddie Deever lounged into Rigby's presence. He seemed relieved to find that the stenographer was ill and would not be down that day. The lanky youngster studiously inspected the array of law books in the cases for some time, occasionally casting a sly glance at Bobby. At last he ventured a remark somewhat out of the ordinary—for him:

"That old man up in Bansemer's office gets on my nerves," said he, settling his long frame in a chair and breaking in upon Rigby's attention so suddenly that the lawyer was startled into a quick look of interest.

"Old Droom? What do you know about him?"

"Nothing in particular, of course. Only he sort of jars me when he talks." Rigby saw that the young man had something on his mind.

"I did not know that you were personal friends," ventured Rigby.

"Friends?" snorted Eddie. "Holy Mackerel! He scares the life out of me. I know him in a business way, that's all. He came down here three weeks ago and

borrowed some books for Bansemer. I had to go up and get 'em yesterday. I was smoking a cigarette. When I asked the old guy for the books he said I'd go to hell if I smoked. I thought I'd be funny, so I said back to him: 'I'll smoke if I go to hell, so what's the diff?' It went all right with him, too. He laughed—you ought to see him laugh!—and told me to sit down while he looked up the books. I was there half an hour and he talked all the time. By jing! He makes your blood run cold. He up and said there was no such place as hell. 'Why not?' says I. 'Because,' says he, 'God, with all His infinite power, could not conceive of a space huge enough to hold all the hypocrites and sinners.' Then he grinned and said he had set aside in his will the sum of a hundred dollars to build a church for the honest man. 'That will be a pretty small church,' says I. 'It will be a small congregation, my son,' says he. 'What few real honest men we have will hesitate to attend for fear of being ostracised by society.' 'Gee whiz, Mr. Droom, that's pretty hard on society,' says I, laughing. 'Oh, for that matter, I have already delivered my eulogy on society,' says he. 'But it ain't dead,' says I. 'Oh, yes; it's so rotten it must surely be dead,' says he in the nastiest way I ever heard. He's a fearful old man, Mr. Rigby. He made a mean remark about that Mrs. David Cable."

"What did he say?" quickly demanded Bobby.

"He said he'd been reading in the papers about how she was breaking into society. 'She's joined the Episcopal church,' says he, sarcastic-like. 'Well, there's

nothing wrong in that,' says I. 'I know, but she attends,' says he, just as if she shouldn't. 'She wouldn't attend if the women in that church wore Salvation Army clothes and played tambourines, let me tell you. None of 'em would. I knew her in New York years ago. She wasn't fashionable then. Now she's so swell that she'll soon be asking Cable to build a mansion at Rose Lawn Cemetery, because all of the fashionables go there.' Pretty raw, eh, Mr. Rigby?"

"Oh, he's an old blatherskite, Eddie. They talk that way when they get old and grouchy. So he knew Mrs. Cable in New York, eh? What else did he say about her?"

"Nothing much. Oh, yes, he did say—in that nasty way of his—that he saw her on the street the other day chatting with one of the richest swells in Chicago. He didn't say who he was except that he was the man who once made his wife sit up all night in the day coach while he slept in the only berth to be had on the train. Do you know who that could be?"

"I'm afraid Droom was romancing," said Bobby, with a smile.

"Say, Mr. Rigby," said Eddie earnestly, "what sort of business does Mr. Bansemer handle?" Rigby had difficulty in controlling his expression. "I was wondering, because while I was there yesterday a girl I know came out of the back room where she had been talking to Bansemer. She's no good."

"Very likely she was consulting him about something," said Rigby quietly.

"She soaked a friend of mine for a thousand when

she was singing in the chorus in one of the theatres here."

"Do you know her well?"

"I—er—did see something of her at one time. Say, don't mention it to Rosie, will you? She's not strong for chorus girls," said Eddie anxiously. "A few days ago I saw a woman come out of his office, heavily veiled. She was crying, because I could hear the sobs. I don't go much on Bansemer, Mr. Rigby. Darn him, he called me a pup one day when I took a message up for Judge Smith."

"See here, Eddie," said Rigby, leaning forward suddenly, "I've heard two or three queer things about Bansemer. I want you to tell me all you hear from Droom and all that you see. Don't you think you could cultivate Droom's acquaintance a bit? Keep this very quiet—not a word to anybody. It may mean something in the end."

"Gee whiz!" murmured Eddie, his eyes wide with interest. From that day on he and Bobby Rigby were allies—even conspirators.

Later in the day Rigby had a telephone message from Graydon Bansemer, suggesting that they lunch together. All he would say over the wire was that he would some day soon expect Rigby to perform a happy service for him. Bobby understood and was troubled. He suspected that Graydon had asked Jane Cable to marry him and that she had consented. He loved Graydon Bansemer, but for the first time in their acquaintance he found himself wondering if the son were not playing into the father's hands in this most desirable

matrimonial venture. With a shudder of repugnance he put the thought from him, loyal to that good friend and comrade.

James Bansemer came into his office late that morning. He had not seen Graydon the night before, but at breakfast the young man announced his good fortune and asked for his blessing. To the son's surprise, the elder man did not at once express his approval. For a long time he sat silent and preoccupied to all appearance, narrowly studying his son's face until the young man was constrained to laugh in his nervousness.

"You love her—you are very sure?" asked the father at last.

"Better than my life," cried Graydon warmly.

"She has good blood in her," said Bansemer, senior, slowly, almost absently.

"I should say so. Her father is a wonderful man."

"Yes, I daresay," agreed the other without taking his eyes from the son's face.

"But you don't say whether you approve or disapprove," complained Graydon.

"Would it change matters if I disapproved?"

"Not in the least, father. I love her. I'd hate to displease you in——"

"Then, of course, I approve," said the other, with his warmest smile. "Jane is a beauty and—I am proud of her."

"She is too good for me," lamented Graydon happily.

"I can't very well contradict her future husband," said the lawyer. There was a hungry look in his eyes

as he glanced from time to time at the face of the boy who had his mother's unforgettable eyes.

A messenger brought Mrs. Cable's note to Bansemer soon after his arrival at the office. He and Elias Droom were in the back office when the boy came. They had been discussing the contents of a letter that came in the early mail. The lawyer accepted the note and dismissed the boy with the curt remark that he would telephone an answer in person.

"It looks to me as though this is going to be a rather ticklish affair," Droom resumed after the boy had closed the outer door behind him. Bansemer's mind was on Mrs. Cable's note; a queer smile hung on his lips.

"I'm rather touched by her astuteness," he said. "She's cleverer than I thought. Oh," suddenly remembering that it was not Mrs. Cable's letter they were discussing, "you always see the dreary side of things, Elias."

"I haven't forgotten New York," said the clerk drily.

"Ah, but Chicago isn't New York, you know."

"Well, I was just reminding you. This man is going to fight back, that is plain."

"That's what Mrs. Norwood promised to do, also, Elias. But she was like a lamb in the end."

"I wouldn't be very proud of that affair, if I were you."

"See here, Droom, you're getting a trifle too familiar of late. I don't like it," said Bansemer sharply.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bansemer," said Droom, scraping his foot across the floor and looking straight

past his master's head. "It's for the good of the cause, that's all. It wouldn't do, on Graydon's account, for you to be driven from Chicago at this time. You see, he thinks you are beyond reproach."

"Curse your impudence, Droom, I won't be spoken to in that way," exclaimed Bansemer, white with sudden rage and loathing.

"Am I to expect my discharge, sir?" asked Droom, rubbing his hands abjectly, but looking squarely into Bansemer's eyes for the first time in their acquaintance. Bansemer glared back for an instant and then shrugged his shoulders with a nervous laugh.

"We shan't quarrel, Elias," he said. "Speaking of Graydon, he is to be married before long."

"I trust he is to do well, sir. Graydon is a fine boy."

"He is to marry David Cable's daughter."

"Indeed? I did not know that David Cable had a daughter."

"You know whom I mean—Jane Cable." He turned rather restlessly, conscious that Droom's eyes were following him to the window. He glanced again at Mrs. Cable's note and waited.

"I suppose you are pleased," said Droom, after a long pause.

"Certainly. Jane is a splendid girl. She's beautiful, accomplished and—well, she's thoroughbred," said Bansemer steadily, turning to face the old man.

"It is not necessary to remind you that she is a child of love," said Droom. "That's the genteel way to put it."

"It's not like you to be genteel, Elias. Still," and he

sat down and leaned forward eagerly, "she has good blood from both sides."

"Yes—the so-called best."

"You speak as if you know the truth."

"I think—yes, I'm sure I know. I have known for twenty years, Mr. Bansemer. I had the same means as you of finding out whose child she was."

"That's more than Mrs. Cable knows."

"She did not take the trouble to investigate. It's too late now."

"I don't believe you really know the names of her father and mother," said Bansemer shrewdly. "You are trying to trick me into telling you what I *do* know."

"There are portraits of her ancestors hanging in Fifth Avenue," said Droom promptly. "Here," and he picked up a pencil, "I'll write the initials of the two persons responsible for her existence. You do the same and we'll see that they tally." He quickly scratched four letters on a pad of paper. Bansemer hesitated and then slowly wrote the initials on the back of an envelope. Without a word they exchanged the papers. After a moment they both smiled in relief. Neither had been tricked. The initials were identical.

"I imagine the ancestors hanging in Fifth Avenue would be amazed if they knew the story of Jane," said Droom, with a chuckle.

"I doubt it, Droom. Ancestors have stories, too, and they hide them."

"Well, she isn't the only girl who doesn't know."

"I dare say. It isn't a wise world."

"It's a lucky one. That's why it assumes to be decent."

"You are quite a cynic, Elias."

"By the way, now that your son is to marry her, I'd like to know just what your game is."

Bansemer turned on him like a tiger, his steely eyes blazing.

"Game? There is no game, damn you. Listen to me, Droom; we'll settle this now. I'm a bad man, but I've tried to be a good father. People have called me heartless. So be it. But I love that boy of mine. What little heart I have belongs to him. There can be no game where he is concerned. Some day, perhaps, he'll find out the kind of a man I've been to others, but can always remember that I was fair and honest with him. He'll despise my methods and he'll spurn my money, but he'll *have* to love *me*. Jane Cable is not the girl I would have chosen for him, but she is good and true and he loves her."

For the first time in his life Elias Droom shrank beneath the eyes of his master. He hated James Bansemer from the bottom of his wretched soul, but he could not but feel, at this moment, a touch of admiration.

Through all the years of their association Elias Droom had hated Bansemer because he was qualified to be the master, because he was successful and forceful, because he had loved and been loved, because they had been classmates but not equals. In the bitterness of his heart he had lain awake on countless nights praying—but not to his God—that the time would

come when he could stand ascendant over this steely master. Only his unswerving loyalty to a duty once assumed kept him from crushing Bansemer with exposure years before. But Droom was not a traitor. He remained standing, lifting his eyes after a brief, shifting study of his bony hands.

"You have nothing to fear from me," he said. "Your boy is the only being in the world that I care for. He hates me. Everybody hates me. But it doesn't matter. I asked what your game was because we know Jane's father and mother. That's all. Mrs. David Cable, I presume, can be preyed upon with safety."

"Mrs. Cable has much to lose," significantly.

"And how much to pay?" with a meaning look.

"That is her affair, Droom."

"I wouldn't press her too hard," cautioned Droom. "She's a woman."

"Never fear. I'm going there for dinner to-night. It's a family affair. By the way, here's a letter from a distinguished political leader. He suggests that I act on the city central committee for the coming year. You've heard of him, I daresay. He says it will mean a great deal to me here in Chicago."

"You are not going into politics?" scornfully.

"Elias, I'm pretty bad, but I'm not bad enough for local politics."

They heard someone at the outer door at that moment, and Droom glided forth from the inner room to greet the visitor. It was Eddie Deever.

"Say, Mr. Droom, do you suppose Mr. Bansemer would object if I sat down here for a few minutes to

look over his books on Famous Crimes in History? Old Smith hasn't got 'em."

"Go ahead," said Droom, taking his seat at the desk. "You are a great reader, I perceive. A literary person like you ought to live in Boston. Everybody reads in Boston."

"Boston?" sniffed Eddie, pulling a book from the shelf. "They're still reading the Old Testament there."

CHAPTER XI

AN EVENING WITH DROOM

Several weeks later Eddie Deever announced, quite breathlessly, to Rigby that he was going over to visit Droom in his Wells Street rooms. The two had found a joint affinity in Napoleon, although it became necessary for the law student to sit up late at night, neglecting other literature, in order to establish anything like an adequate acquaintance with the lamented Corsican.

Rigby was now morally certain that James Bansemer was all that Harbert had painted. To his surprise, however, the man was not openly suspected by other members of the bar. He had been accepted as a man of power and ability. Certainly he was too clever to expose himself and too wary to leave peepholes for others engaged in that business. Rigby was debating the wisdom of going to Bansemer with his accusations and the secret advice to leave the city before anything happened that might throw shame upon Graydon. The courage to do the thing alone was lacking.

Graydon was full of his happiness. He had asked Rigby to act as his "best man" in September, and Bobby had promised. On occasions when the two young men discussed the coming event with Jane and Miss Clegg, Rigby's preoccupied air was strangely

in contrast with the animation of the others. Graydon accused his liver and advised him to go to French Lick. Far from that, the old quarterback was gradually preparing himself to go to James Bansemer. To himself he was saying, as he put off the disagreeable task from day to day: "He'll kick me out of the office and that's all the reward I'll get for my pains. Graydon will hate me in the end."

James Bansemer had proposed a trip to Europe as a wedding journey, a present from himself, but Graydon declined. He would not take an extensive leave of absence from the office of Clegg, Groll & Davidson at this stage of his career.

The morning after his visit to the abode of Elias Droom, Eddie Deever strolled into the office of Bobby Rigby. He looked as though he had spent a sleepless night. Mr. Rigby was out, but Miss Keating was "at home." She was scathingly polite to her delinquent admirer. Eddie's visits of late to the office had not been of a social character. He devoted much of his time to low-toned conversations with Rigby; few were the occasions when he lounged affably upon her typewriting desk as of yore.

"You look as if you'd had a night of it," remarked Rosie. Eddie yawned obligingly. "Don't sit on my desk. Can't you see those letters?"

"Gee, you're getting touchy of late. I'll move the letters."

"No, you won't," she objected. "Besides, it doesn't look well. What if someone should come in—suddenly?"

"Well, it wouldn't be the first time I got out suddenly, would it?" He retained his seat on the desk. "Say, where's Rigby?"

"You mean *Mr.* Rigby? He's out."

"Gee, you're also snippy. Well, give him my regards. So long."

He was unwinding his long legs preparatory to a descent from his perch.

"Don't rush," she said quickly. He rewound his legs and yawned. "Goodness, you're not affected with insomnia, are you?"

"I've got it the worst way. I got awake at eight o'clock this morning and I couldn't go to sleep again to save my soul. It's an awful disease. Will Rigby be back soon?"

"It won't matter. He's engaged," she snapped, cracking away at her machine.

"I've heard there was some prospect. She's a fine looker."

"Rubber-neck!"

"Say, Rosie, I'm going to ask a girl to go to the theatre with me," said Eddie complacently.

"Indeed! Well, ask her. I don't care."

"To-morrow night. Will you go?"

"Who? Me?"

"Sure. I—I wouldn't take anybody else, you know."

"What theatre?" she asked with her rarest smile.

At that instant Rigby came in. Without a word Eddie popped up, a bit red in the face, and followed the lawyer into the private room, closing the door behind him. Rosie's ears went very pink and she pounded

the keys so viciously that the machine trembled on the verge of collapse.

"Gee, Mr. Rigby, that old Droom's a holy terror. He kept me there till after one o'clock. But I'm going back again soon some night. He's got an awful joint. But that isn't what I wanted to see you about. I ran across May Rosabel, that chorus girl I was telling you about. Saw her downtown in a restaurant at one this morning. She wanted to buy the drinks and said she had more money than a rabbit. There was a gang with her. I got her to one side and she said an uncle had just died and left her a fortune. She wouldn't say how much, but it must have been quite a bunch. I know all of her uncles. She's got three. They work out at Pullman, Mr. Rigby, and they couldn't leave thirty cents between them if they all died at once."

After hearing this, Rigby decided to confront Bansemer at once. It did not occur to him until later that the easiest and most effective way to drive Bansemer from Chicago without scandal was through Elias Droom. When the thought came to him, however, he rejoiced. The new plan was to sow the seeds of apprehension with Droom; Bansemer would not be long in reaping their harvest—of dismay. Ten apparently innocent words from Eddie Deever would open Droom's eyes to the dangers ahead.

Young Mr. Deever met with harsh disappointment when he came forth to renew his conversation with Rosie Keating. She was chatting at the telephone, her face wreathed in smiles.

"Thank you," she was saying, "it will be so nice.

I was afraid I had an engagement for to-morrow night, but I haven't. Everybody says it's a perfectly lovely play. I'm crazy to see it. What? About seven-thirty. It takes nearly half an hour down on the Clark Street cable. Slowest old thing ever. All right. Good-bye." Then she hung up the receiver and turned upon Eddie, who stood aghast near the desk. "Oh, I thought you'd gone."

"Say, what was that you were saying over the 'phone? Didn't I ask you——"

"I'm going to the theatre with Mr. Kempshall. Why?"

"*Why?* Why, you know I asked you to——"

"You didn't specify, Eddie, that's all. I'll go some other night with you. Good-bye." Clackety-clack went the machine, throwing insult into his very face, as it were. He tramped out of the office in high dudgeon.

"Confound this detective business, anyhow," he might have been heard to remark. Three nights later, however, he took Rosie to the play, and on the fourth night he was Droom's guest again in the rooms across the river. He was well prepared to begin the campaign of insinuation which was to affect Bansemer in the end. Sitting stiff and uncomfortable in the dingy living-room overlooking Wells Street, he watched with awe the master of the place at work on the finishing touches of a new "invention," the uses of which he did not offer to explain.

He was without a coat and his shirt sleeves were rolled far above the elbows, displaying long, sinewy arms,

hairy and not unlike those of the orang-outang Eddie had seen in Lincoln Park.

"I've got a new way of inflicting the death penalty," the gaunt old man said, slipping into a heavy, quilted dressing-gown. "These rascals don't mind hanging or the penitentiary. But if they thought their bodies would be everlastingly destroyed by quicklime, they'd hesitate before killing their fellow-men."

"But they already bury them in quicklime in England," said Eddie loftily.

"Yes, but not until after they're dead," said Droom with a cackle. He grinned broadly at the sight of the youth's horror-struck face. "Go ahead and smoke, my boy. I'll light my pipe. Make yourself at home. I keep the window closed to keep out the sound of those Wells Street cars. It's good of you to come over here and cheer up an old man's evenings. I'm—I'm not used to it," he said with a wistful touch which was lost to Eddie.

"You ought to have a wife and a lot of children, Mr. Droom," said Eddie with characteristic thoughtlessness. Droom stirred the fire and scowled. "Were you ever married?"

"No. I don't believe in marriage," said Droom sullenly.

"Gee! Why not?"

"Why should I? It's the way I was brought up."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes. My father was a Catholic priest."

"But, Great Scott, Catholics believe in marriage."

"They don't believe in their priests marrying."

"Well, they *don't* marry, do they?"

"No, they don't," answered Droom with a laugh that sounded like a snarl. It took Eddie two days to comprehend. "I saw the girl to-day that young Graydon Bansemer is to marry—Miss Cable."

"Say, she's swell, isn't she?" said Eddie. The old man slunk into his chair.

"She's very pretty. Mr. Graydon introduced me to her."

"Gee!" was all Eddie could say.

"They were crossing Wells Street down below here on the way home from a nickel-plater's in Indiana Street. I saw her years ago, but she didn't remember me. I didn't expect it, however."

"I—how could she have forgotten you?"

"Oh, she'd have forgotten her mother at that age. She was but three months old. I don't think she liked me to-day. I'm not what you call a ladies' man," grinned Elias, puffing at his pipe as he picked up the volumes on Napoleon. Eddie laughed politely but uncomfortably.

"How old are you, Mr. Droom?"

"I'm as old as Methuselah."

"Aw, go 'way!"

"When he was a boy," laughed Elias, enjoying his quip immensely. "Miss Cable seems to be very fond of Graydon. That will last for a couple of years and then she'll probably be like two-thirds of the rest of 'em. Other men will be paying attention to her and she looking for admiration everywhere. You'd be surprised to know how much of that is going on in Chi-

cago. Women can't seem to be satisfied with one husband. They must have another one or two—usually somebody else's."

"You talk like a society man, Mr. Droom."

"Well, I've met a few society men—professionally. And women, too, for that matter. Look out for a sensational divorce case within the next few weeks. It's bound to come unless things change. Terribly nasty affair."

"Is Mr. Bansemer interested?" asked Eddie, holding tight to his chair.

"Oh, no. We don't go in for that sort of thing."

"I wonder if Mr. Bansemer knows about the mistake that came near happening to him a week or two ago. I got hold of it through a boy that works in the United States Marshal's office," said Eddie, cold as ice now that he was making the test. Droom turned upon him quickly.

"What mistake? What do you mean?"

"It would have been a rich joke on Mr. Bansemer. Seems that some lawyer is likely to be charged with blackmail, and they got Mr. Bansemer's name mixed up in it some way. Of course, nothing came of it, but—I just wondered if anybody had told him of the close call he'd had."

Droom stared straight beyond the young liar and was silent for a full minute. Then he deliberately opened the book on his knee and began to turn the pages.

"That *would* have been a joke on Mr. Bansemer," he said indifferently.

"I don't think he would have enjoyed it, do you?"

"No one enjoys jokes from the United States Marshal's office," said Droom grimly. "By the way, who is the lawyer that really was wanted?"

"I never heard. I believe it was dropped. The young fellow I know said he couldn't talk about it, so I didn't ask. Say, who was that swell woman I saw coming out of your office to-day? I was up at Mr. Hornbrook's."

Droom hesitated a moment. He seemed to be weighing everything he said.

"I suspect it was young Bansemer's future mother-in-law," he said. "Mrs. David Cable was there this afternoon about three."

"Gee," laughed Eddie. "Does she need a lawyer?"

"Mr. Bansemer transacted business for her some time ago. A very small matter, if I remember correctly. Here, listen to this. Now here's a little incident I found this evening that interests me immensely. It proves to my mind one of two points I hold in regard to Marshal Ney. Listen," and he read at length from his book, a dry, sepulchral monotone that grated on the ear until it became almost unendurable.

The little clock on the mantelpiece clanged ten before they laid aside Napoleon and began to talk about something that interested Eddie Deever far more than all else—Elias Droom himself and such of his experiences as he cared to relate. The old man told stories about the dark sides of New York life, tales of murder, thievery, rascality high and low, and he told them with blood-curdling directness. The Walker wife-murder; the inside facts of the De Pugh divorce scandal; the

Harvey family's skeleton—all food for the dime-novel producer. Eddie revelled in these recitals even while he shuddered at the way in which the old man gave them.

"Ah, this is a wicked old world," said Droom, refilling his pipe and showing his teeth as he puffed. "That's why I have those pictures of the Madonna on the wall —to keep me from forgetting that there are beautiful things in the world in spite of its ugliness and hypocrisy. I haven't much——"

He stopped short and listened intently. The sounds of footsteps on the stairs outside came to his ears. They clumped upward, paused for a moment down the little hall and then approached Droom's doorway. Host and guest looked at the clock instinctively. Eddie heard Droom's breath as it came faster between puffs at his pipe. Then there was a resounding rap at the panel of the door. Eddie Deever never forgot the look that swept over the old man's face—the look of wonder, dread, desperation. It passed in an instant, and he arose unsteadily, undecidedly, to admit the late caller. His long frame seemed to shake like a reed as he stood cautiously inside the bolted door and called out:

"Who's there?"

"Messenger," was the muffled response. Droom hesitated a moment, looking first at Eddie and then toward the window. Slowly he unbolted the door. A small A. D. T. boy stood beyond.

"What is it?" almost gasped Elias Droom, drawing the boy into the room.

"Mr. Droom? No answer, sir. Sign here." The

boy, snow-covered, drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to Droom.

"Where from?" demanded the old clerk, the paper rattling in his fingers.

"I don't know. I'm from Chicago Avenue," said the boy, with proper impudence. He took one look at Droom's face as the man handed the slip back to him and then hurried downstairs, far less impudent at heart than he had been.

Droom recognised the handwriting on the envelope as James Bansemer's. It was the first time his employer had communicated with him in this manner. He tore open the envelope and anxiously read the brief missive.

"I've got to go to the office," he said, surprise still lingering in his face. "It's important business—a consultation with—er—with an Eastern client."

"Gee, it's tough to turn out this kind of a night. I'm going your way, Mr. Droom. Come on, I'll take the car down with you."

"I—I won't be ready for some time."

"Oh, well, I'll say good-night, then."

Eddie Deever departed, chuckling to himself as he made his way to the U—— Building, determined to learn what he could of this unusual summons.

But Droom was too crafty. Bansemer's letter had asked him to come to Rector's restaurant and not to the U—— Building. The command was imperative.

Bansemer had been spending the evening at the home of David Cable.

CHAPTER XII

JAMES BANSEMER CALLS

Following close upon Mrs. Cable's visit to his office in the afternoon, Bansemer presented himself at her home in the evening, urbane, courtly, but characteristically aggressive. Her action in bearding him in his den was not surprising, even though it might have been considered unusual. He had been well aware for some time that she was sorely uneasy and that it was only a question of time when she would make the expected advances. Since the announcement of Jane's engagement Bansemer had been punctiliously considerate; and yet, underneath his faultless exterior, Mrs. Cable felt that she could recognise the deadly poise of other intentions. She lived in fear that they would spring upon her as if from the dark and that she would be powerless to combat them. Something stronger than words or even intuition told her that James Bansemer was not to be turned aside by sentiment.

Driven at last to the point where she felt that she must know his intentions, she boldly ventured into his consultation room, a trembling but determined creature whose flesh quivered with chill despite the furs that foiled the wintry winds. Elias Droom passed her on into the private room with a polite grin that set her teeth on edge.

She left the building fifteen minutes later, nursing a wild but forlorn hope that James Bansemer meant no evil, after all. Without hesitation she told him plainly that she came to learn the precise nature of his attitude toward herself and the girl. Bansemer's resentment appeared too real to have been simulated. He was almost harsh in his response to the inference. In the end, however, he was a little less than tender in his efforts to convince her that she had cruelly misjudged him. She went away with a chill in her heart dislodged, but not dissolved. When he asked if she and Mr. Cable would be at home that night for a game of cards, she felt obliged to urge him to come. It was not until she was in the carriage below that she remembered that David Cable was to attend a big banquet at the Auditorium that night, and that Jane would be at the theatre with friends.

Bansemer smiled serenely as he escorted her to the door. "We will not permit anything to happen which might bring misery to the two beings so dear to us," he assured her at parting.

Shortly after eight he entered the Cable home. He had gone to Chicago Avenue beforehand to send a telegram East. From the corner of Clark Street, he walked across town toward the lake, facing the bitter gale with poor grace. In Washington Place he passed two men going from their cab into the Union Club. He did not look at them nor did he see that they turned and stared after him as he buffeted his way across Dearborn Avenue. One of the men was Bobby Rigby; the other, Denis Harbert of New York.

"It's the same Bansemer," said Harbert as they entered the club. "I'd know him in a million."

At the Cables' a servant, on opening the door, announced that Mr. Cable was not at home.

"Is Mrs. Cable at home?" asked Mr. Bansemer, making no effort to find his cardcase.

"Yes, sir," responded the servant after a moment's hesitation. Bansemer passed through the vestibule.

"Say Mr. Bansemer, if you please."

He removed his coat and was standing comfortably in front of the blazing logs in the library when she came down.

"I thought the night was too dreadful for anyone to venture out unless——" she was saying as she gave him her hand.

"A night indoors and alone is a thousandfold more dreadful than one outdoors in quest of good company," interrupted Bansemer. He drew up chairs in front of the fireplace and stood by waiting for her to be seated.

"I had forgotten that Mr. Cable was to attend a banquet at the Auditorium," she explained nervously, confident, however, that he felt she had not forgotten.

"To be sure," he said. "This is the night of the banquet. I was not invited."

"I tried to telephone to ask you to come to-morrow night. The storm has played havoc with the wires. It is impossible to get connection with anyone." A servant appeared in the doorway.

"You are wanted at the telephone, Mrs. Cable. Shall I say you will come?"

Flushing to the roots of her hair, the mistress of the

house excused herself and left the room. Bansemer leaned back in his chair and smiled. She returned a few minutes later with a fluttering apology.

"What a terrible night it must be for those poor linemen," she said. "I remember what it meant to be a railroad lineman in the West years ago. The blizzards out there are a great deal more severe than those we have here, Mr. Bansemer. Just think of the poor fellows who are repairing the lines to-night. Doesn't it seem heartless?"

"It does, indeed. And yet, I daresay you've been scolding them bitterly all evening. One seldom thinks it worth while to be merciful when the telephone refuses to obey. It's only a true philanthropist who can forgive the telephone. However, I am grateful to the blizzard and happy. Fair weather would have deprived me of pleasure."

"I am sorry Mr. Cable is not at home," she said quickly.

"I doubt if I shall miss him greatly," said he.

"He expects to leave early—he isn't well," she hastened to say. "Don't you want to smoke?"

"A cigarette, if you don't mind. By the way, where is my future daughter-in-law? Surely I may see her to-night."

"She is at the theatre—with the Fernmores. Graydon is one of the party. Didn't you know?" she asked suddenly.

"I do remember it now. He left the apartment quite early. Then I have Fernmore to thank for—we are alone." He leaned forward in his chair and flicked the

cigarette ashes into the fire, his black eyes looking into hers with unmistakable intentness.

"You assured me to-day that you would be fair," she said with strange calmness, meeting his gaze unflinchingly.

"I am fair. What more can you ask?" with a light laugh.

"Why did you say to-day that I had nothing to fear from you?" she demanded.

"You have nothing to fear. Why should you fear me? For twenty years your face has not been out of my memory. Why should I seek to hurt you, then? Why should I not rejoice in the tie that binds our interests—our lives, for that matter? Come, I ask if I am not fair?"

Her face became pale, her heart cold. She understood. The mask was off. He veiled his threat in the simplest words possible; the purpose looked through with greedy disdain for grace.

"I can offer no more than I offered to-day," she said.

"Do you suppose I would accept money in payment for my son's peace of mind?" declared Bansemer, with finely assumed scorn. "You offered me ten thousand dollars. You will never know how that hurt me, coming from you. Money? What is money to me in an affair like this? I care more for one tender touch of your fingers than all the money in the world! You—and you alone, can mould every impulse in me. For half my life I have been hated. No one has given me a grain of love. I must have it. For years you have

not been out of my mind—I have not been out of yours."

"Stop!" she cried angrily. "You have no right to say such things to me. You have been in my mind all these years, but oh, how I have hated you!"

Like a flash, his manner changed. He had her in his power, and it was not in his nature to permit his subjects to dictate to him. Craft and coercion always had been his allies; craft could not win a woman's heart, but coercion might crush it into submission. It was not like James Bansemer to play a waiting game after it had been fairly started.

"Now listen to me," he said distinctly. "You cannot afford to talk like that. You cannot afford to make an enemy of me. I mean what I——"

"What would you do?" she cried. "You have promised that nothing shall happen to mar the lives of our children. You have given me your pledge. Is it worthless? Is it——"

"I wouldn't speak so loud if I were you," said he slowly. "The walls have ears. You have much to lose if ears other than those in the wall should hear what could be said. It would mean disaster. I know, at least, that you do not love David Cable——"

"What! I—I worship my husband," she cried, her eyes flashing, her bosom heaving. "I love him better than anything else in all the world. How dare you say that to me!"

"Control yourself," he cautioned calmly. "Permit me to say you love the position he has given you. You love the pedestal on which you stand so insecurely. You

would rather hear his curse than to see the hand of social ostracism raised against you. Wait! A word from me and not only David Cable, but the whole world would turn against you."

"I have committed no crime," she flared back at him. "I have deceived my husband, but I have not dishonoured him. Tell the world everything, if you will."

"It would be a luscious tale," he said with an evil laugh. "The world, which is wicked, might forget the fact that Jane is not David's daughter; but David would not forget that she is yours."

"What do you mean?" starting from her chair.

"I think you understand," he said deliberately.

"My God, she is *not* my child!" she cried in horror. "You know she isn't. You know the entire story. You——"

"I only know that you brought her to me and that I did you a service. Don't ask me to be brutal and say more." She sank back and glared at him like a helpless, wounded thing, the full force of his threat rushing in upon her.

"You—you *couldn't* do *that*," she whispered tremulously.

"I could, but I don't see why I should," he said, leaning closer to her shrinking figure.

"You know it isn't true," faintly.

"I only know that I am trying to save you from calamity."

"Oh, what a beast you are!" she cried, springing to her feet. "Go! I defy you! Do and say what you will. Only go!"

He rose calmly, a satisfied smile on his face.

"I shall, of course, first of all, forbid my son to marry the young woman. It will be necessary for me to explain the reason to Mr. Cable. I am sorry to have distressed you. Really, I had expected quite a different evening, after your invitation. You can't blame me for misunderstanding your motive in asking me to come here when you expected to be utterly alone." His laugh was a sneer.

"Poor—poor little Jane!" murmured the harassed woman, clasping her hands over her eyes; then suddenly she cried out: "What a devil you are to barter with your son's happiness!"

"I'll not mince matters," he said harshly. "You and I must understand each other. To be perfectly frank, everything rests with you. Call me a beast if you like. As a beast I can destroy you, and I will."

"You forget that I can go to my husband and tell him everything. He will hate me, but he will believe me," she said, facing him once more.

"The world will believe me," he scoffed.

"Not after I tell the world that you tried to blackmail me—that you have demanded fifty thousand dollars."

"But I haven't made such a demand."

"I can *swear* that you have," she cried triumphantly. He glared at her for a moment, his past coming up from behind with a rush that left him nothing to stand on.

"I am willing to run the risk of scandal, if you are,

"'AS A BEAST I CAN DESTROY YOU AND I WILL'"

my dear," he said after a moment, his hands clenched behind him. "It will be very costly. You have much to lose."

"I think," she said shrewdly, guessing his weakness even as he saw it, "that we can talk sensibly of the situation from now on. I am not afraid of you."

He looked at her steadily for a moment, reading her thoughts, seeing her trembling heart. Then he said drily:

"I'll do nothing for a week, and then you'll send for me."

The door in the vestibule opened suddenly and someone—aye, more than one—came in from the outside. Mrs. Cable started to her feet and turned toward the library door. Bansemer was standing close by her side. He turned to move away as David Cable stepped to the door to look in. Cable's coat collar was about his ears and he was removing his gloves. For a moment he stood motionless, gazing upon the occupants of the room.

Then, for the first time, there flashed before him the sharp point of steel which was to pierce his brain later on with deadly suspicion and doubt. There was no mistaking the confusion of Mrs. Cable and her visitor. It was manifest that they had not expected him to appear so unexpectedly. He remembered now that on two other occasions he had found Bansemer at his house, and alone with Mrs. Cable, but he had not regarded it as extraordinary. But there was a startled look in her eyes to-night, an indecision in her greeting that caused him to knit his brows and lift his hand un-

consciously to his temple before speaking. He heard Bansemer say that he was just going, but that he would stay for a short chat about the banquet. Mrs. Cable turned to stir the fire with the poker, an unusual act on her part he was not slow to observe. The seed was sown.

"I brought Bobby over from the club with me—and a friend, Frances," he said, after asking Bansemer to sit down for a while. His keen eyes noted that her hand shook as she put the poker back into its place. As he walked into the hall to throw aside his coat, Frances Cable turned to Bansemer with a significant look, shaking her head in mute appeal for silence.

Bobby Rigby came into the room, followed by a tall stranger, whom he presented to Mrs. Cable. Bansemer, standing near the library table, caught a glimpse of the stranger's face as he took Mrs. Cable's hand. He started violently, unable at first to believe his eyes. A chill ran through his frame and his expression changed from wonder to consternation.

"Mr. Bansemer, my friend, Mr. Harbert."

"I have met Mr. Bansemer," said Harbert, with a cold stare straight into the other's eyes. They were on opposite sides of the table.

"In New York," said Bansemer firmly, his eyes unflinching in their return. He noticed that Harbert's look was uncompromisingly antagonistic, but that was to be expected. It troubled him, however, to see something like unfriendliness in Rigby's greeting.

Harbert was the man who had fought him to rout in New York. This keen, aggressive young barrister

had driven him into a corner from which he escaped only by merest chance. He knew James Bansemer for what he was. It had not been his fault that the man crawled through a small avenue of technicalities and avoided the punishment that had seemed so certain. He had waged war bitterly against the blackmailer, and he missed complete victory by a hair's breadth.

Feeling the strain of the situation, Rigby talked with earnest volubility. He led the conversation into many lines—the war in the Philippines, the banquet, the play which Jane and Graydon were seeing. The thought of the play brought a shade of despair to his brow—pretty Miss Clegg was in the party with that "mucker" Medford.

James Bansemer had been cold with speculation every instant of the time; had felt that Harbert's condemning gaze had never left him. Apparently listening to the others, he found himself wondering what Harbert's trip to Chicago signified. Gradually it dawned upon him that his old-time foe was not through with his fighting. The look in Rigby's eyes meant something, after all—and Rigby was Graydon's best friend! Harbert was in Chicago to act—and to act first! This thought shot into the man's brain like burning metal. It set every nerve afire. His nemesis had already begun his work. Before he left the Cable home that night he would be asking his host and hostess what they knew of one James Bansemer's past.

As Bansemer arose to say good-night to the others, Harbert's eyes met his with deadly directness.

"Where are your offices, Mr. Bansemer?" asked the

New Yorker. There was something significant in the question.

"Mr. Rigby and I have offices in the same building," he replied. "Will you come in and see me?"

"I shall try," said the other.

To have saved his life, Bansemer could not meet David Cable's questioning eyes as he shook hands with him. Cable's hands were like ice.

Outside the house, in the whirling gale, the tall lawyer breathed easier, but not securely. His brain was clogged with doubts, fears, prophecies—all whirling like mad around the ominous figure of Denis Harbert.

Suddenly, he stopped stockstill, the bitter scowl deepening in his eyes. With an oath he turned abruptly and hurried in the opposite direction. The time had come to make ready for battle. A few minutes later, he was writing the note which created so much commotion in the home of Elias Droom.

CHAPTER XIII

JANE SEES WITH NEW EYES

It was not until the hurrying Bansemer entered the door of Rector's that the apprehension of having committed a senseless blunder came to him.

"Good heavens!" he muttered, stopping short. "What a fool I'm getting to be—meeting old Elias, in a place like this! The theatre crowds—everybody in town will be here by eleven! Curse me, for a hopeless ass! I must get him away at once!"

Grumbling at himself, he passed into the restaurant. Gabe offered him the choice of various tables; he selected one which commanded a view of the entrances and ordered a perfunctory "Scotch." Nervous and anxious, he was more troubled than he cared to admit even to himself. Fortunately, there were not many people in the café; and his gaze, wandering about the place, soon halted before the small alcove in the east end containing a table with wine glasses, in waiting, set for a large party. The clock, back of the cigar-stand, said it was five minutes after eleven. Bansemer impatiently watched the two doors leading to the street, and was beginning to wonder whether the message had reached the old clerk, when presently, the uncouth shape of Droom, appeared slinking through the so-called ladies' entrance, with the shrinking attitude of

one unaccustomed to fashionable restaurants and doubtful of his reception. Bansemer motioned to him.

"Just as soon as I can get my check," he was saying, at the same time, beckoning to a waiter; "we'll move out of this. It will be crowded in—I never thought, a stall at Chapin & Gore's will be better. Here, waiter! My check! I'm in a hurry!—the devil!"

As the exclamation burst from his lips, there came down the narrow steps and through a door quickly thrown open by a waiter, a number of gay, fashionably dressed people, all smiling and trembling with the cold. Immediately, this party attracted the attention of the room. Waiters rushed hither and thither relieving the ladies of their costly lace and fur wraps, and the men of their heavy overcoats. Of the expected theatre-comers, these were the first to arrive; but presently others followed, and soon the quiet café of the early evening became transformed into one of bustle and excitement by the eager, animated throng. With dismay Bansemer noticed that those to whom his attention had been attracted were blocking his way to the doors; escape was out of the question. Reluctantly, he returned to his seat and ordered the clerk to take the one opposite him. Then, scanning the party making its passage to the alcove, he perceived three or four men whom he knew, and presently, to his surprise and consternation—his son. The recognition was mutual, Graydon making his way around a small table in order to affectionately greet him. As he approached, his eyes fastened themselves on his father's companion. With amazement, he recognised the queer figure of the

lanky, gangling Droom; but too kind-hearted and well-bred to allow his features in the slightest degree to express the astonishment which he felt at sight of such a comic incongruity, the young man voiced a few kindly words to the old man, while from the table in the alcove, where the smart, little supper party were seating themselves, Miss Cable was smiling her cheery recognition to her prospective father-in-law; then Graydon made his way back to his seat by her side.

"Why did you come here?" asked Droom, feeling somewhat akin to the proverbial fish out of water.

"Because I thought—I thought you couldn't find any other place," replied Bansemer, confusedly.

The unexpected arrival of his son and party had disturbed his usual coolness; but with his order for supper his equilibrium returned, and he went on to explain:

"I supposed you knew only two streets in town—Wells and South Water."

"Humph! I know every street in town," Droom resented, drawing himself up in his chair; and then bluntly: "What's happened?"

"Not so loud! Harbert's here, but——"

"Oho! Here?"

"In Chicago, yes—we'll talk about it later."

The present genial environment and convivial atmosphere were producing a most inspiriting effect on the lawyer. The delightful consciousness that the people with whom his son was supping were of the smartest set in town for the moment had banished all fears of exposure. From time to time he glanced proudly

across to the alcove table where the men were engaged in unfolding their napkins and toying with their glasses, in lively anticipation of the enjoyment to come; while the women, with the hope of eliciting admiration for their hands and the sparkle of their rings, were taking off their gloves and spreading out their fingers on the table cloth.

"Graydon seems to be right in the swim, eh, Droom?" he said. The irony of it all appealed strongly to his sense of humour. "I don't suppose you know those swells?" he added, patronisingly. Droom was listening intently to the bursts of merriment which were enlivening the restaurant. Like a small boy at a circus who fears that something will happen that he will not see, he was continually turning his head and letting his eyes travel critically over the company at the neighbouring table.

At this speech of Bansemer's the eyes of the old clerk returned; they expressed no little resentment at the inference.

"Certainly, I do;" and leaning over the table and covertly indicating with his long, bony finger the man at the head of the table, he answered succinctly: "That's Fernmore—he's——"

A particularly loud burst of laughter cut him short. At the adjoining tables conversation had abruptly ceased; heads were turned and inquisitive eyes were fastened on the brilliant coterie at the alcove table.

Few men in Chicago were better known or better liked than the stout, florid complexioned, jovial-looking Billy Fernmore, the host of this entertainment. His

social adventures and the headlong follies in which his fun-loving proclivities invariably enmeshed him were only surpassed by his fondness for ridding himself of his unlimited wealth.

To his inherited five millions marriage had added the colossal fortune of a beautiful heiress, whose extravagances aggregated less than his own solely through the limitations of her sex. Yet, were it not for the self-imposed handicap of adhering strictly to the somewhat old-fashioned precept that jewels should be acquired only through affectionate beneficence, Mrs. Fernmore might have succeeded in surpassing the princely prodigalities of her lord and master.

"It was this way," Billy was saying, in his own inimitable manner, and awake to the realisation of having a "good one" to tell; "a few days ago the lady of my house took wings for New York—a little spree of her own, you understand. And, for Billy Fernmore, I kept out of mischief, for a time, fairly well. After waiting days, lamb-like, for her return, restlessness——-;" and here Fernmore's shameless affectation of the neglected husband became so irresistibly funny that it provoked prolonged laughter from his listeners, even Droom showing his yellow snags and stretching his mouth to the fullest extent of the law, as he joined in the general chorus; "restlessness gave way to recklessness, and in desperation I invited a half dozen of the oldest and most distinguished widowers in town to dine with me, at the hotel, where they were informed they were to be honoured by the presence of a bevy of the season's prettiest débutantes. My stars, but

they were a fine collection of old innocents!" Fernmore threw himself back in his chair and roared at the recollection.

"Billy's a wonder when he's wound up!" Medford's whispered aside to the lady on his right met with a simple nod of the head; for despite Miss Clegg's well-feigned interest in Mr. Medford when Rigby was present, on other occasions there was no pretence of enjoyment of his society.

"Among those present—to use the correct phrase," said Billy, after having refreshed himself with sufficient champagne to proceed; "were two retired merchants, a venerable logician, a doddering banker, and a half-blind college professor. Of course, I had to make some excuse for Mrs. Fernmore's absence. For the life of me I cannot now remember what yarn I told them; but they were too anxious to be presented to the gay, young women not to swallow it—whole. The old boys fairly swamped the girls with their senile attentions. It was a lively supper party—my word! And they went home unanimously declaring that the débutantes of the present day discounted, at least in dash and go, the charmers of fifty years ago."

Amidst the confusion of peals of merriment which greeted the genial raconteur, Miss Cable, to whom the story did not especially appeal, whispered in awed tones:

"Graydon, who on earth is that queer, spectacular looking man with your father?"

"Oh, that's Droom—isn't he a character? He's been with the governor since I was a child. In those days

his looks used to frighten me almost to death. I fancy he's had a sad life, don't you know."

"There is something positively awful in his face," returned the girl, as her eyes faltered and dropped to her plate on unexpectedly meeting those of the subject of her remark.

"Sh-h!" came from Medford; and then: "Come, Billy—what's the point—or the moral, as they say in novels?"

"Fernmore is a rattling good chap, at heart," Graydon was saying to Jane; "but I can't stand that Med——"

"Yes, yes, go on, Mr. Fernmore," broke in several voices in eager expectancy.

"The moral?" Billy's eyes were twinkling. "The joke, rather, is on me. When Mrs. Fernmore reached home I thought it wise to say nothing about the affair; but I had completely underestimated the persistency of these rejuvenated venerables. They were not satisfied—wanted to know more about the girls; and the next day in deep but joyous simplicity, half a dozen old men asked their married daughters and close friends at the clubs what family of Brown a certain débutante belonged to; who was the father of Miss Jones; and how long had the family of Miss Robinson lived in the city, together with a lot of amazing questions. And failing to derive even the remotest satisfaction from the Social Register, the women members of their families besieged my innocent wife with more or less shocked inquiries as to an entertainment of mine at which their aged relations were present. Well, the game was up!

I owned up—confessed to the girls being actresses and begged for mercy."

"And I forgave him," supplemented Mrs. Fernmore, smilingly. "Boys will be boys."

"Whew!" whistled Billy, in conclusion. "It was no end of a lark! I would not have missed it for the world; but the old chaps will never, never forgive me."

As the gentleman finished, Bansemer was looking at Droom with amusement. The old clerk was shaking his head in a manner that signified disapproval.

"How's that for doings in swagger society, eh, Droom? If anyone but Billy Fernmore had done that, he would have been ostracised forever. Nothing like millions——"

"I don't believe true aristocrats would do that," interrupted Droom, half angrily.

"These are the aristocrats—money aristocrats; the others have lost the name—forgotten. Come, let's go over yonder—we can talk there."

Bansemer called for the bill and settled it; then slowly rising, ostentatiously waved his adieus to the alcove and deserted the scene for Chapin & Gore's. Droom meekly followed his employer.

For some time, neither spoke. In their stall, each was busy with his own thoughts and speculations.

"I think I've made a mess of it with Mrs. Cable," began Bansemer. "She——"

"I wouldn't mention names," cautioned Droom, with a look at the top of the partition.

"She's very likely to fight back, after all."

"What was your demand?"

"Money," said Bansemer, quietly.

"Humph!" was Droom's way of saying he lied.

"Harbert has a purpose in coming here, Elias. We must prepare for him."

"We are as well prepared as we can expect to be. I guess it means that we'll have to get out of Chicago."

"Curse him!" snarled Bansemer. "I don't care a rap about myself; but it will be all up with Graydon if anything—er—unpleasant should happen to me," said Bansemer, with a wistful glance at his glass. Then, in subdued tones, he told of the meeting with Harbert. Droom agreed that the situation looked unpleasant, and all the more so in view of what Eddie Deever had mentioned in connection with the Marshal's office. He repeated the story as it had come from the babbling, youngster's lips, utterly deceived by the guileless emissary from the office downstairs.

"What do you expect to do?" he asked, studying the tense face of his employer.

"I'm going to stand my ground," said Bansemer, steadily drumming on the table with his stiff fingers. "They can't prove anything, and the man who makes a charge against me will have to substantiate it. I'll not run a step."

"Then," said Droom, coarsely, "you must let Mrs. Cable alone. She is your danger signal. I tell you, Mr. Bansemer, she'll fight if you drive her into a corner. She's not a true aristocrat. She comes of a class that doesn't give up."

"Bah! She's like the rest. If Harbert doesn't get in his nasty work, she'll give in like all the others."

"I thought you said you'd do nothing to mar the happiness of Graydon," sneered Droom.

"I don't intend to, you old fool. This affair is between Mrs. Cable and me. If she wins, I'll give up. But, understand me, I'm perfectly capable of knowing just when I'm beaten."

"I only know your financial valour," said Elias drily.

"That's all you're expected to know, sir."

"Then, we won't quarrel about it," said the other with his sweetest grin.

"Umph! Well, pleasantries aside, we must look ourselves over carefully before we see our New York friend. He must not find us with unclean linen. Elias, I'm worried, I'll confess, but I'm not afraid. Is there anything that we have bungled?"

"I have always been afraid of the chorus-girl business. I don't like chorus girls." Bansemer, at another time, would have smiled.

It was past midnight when the two left the stall and started in separate ways for their North Side homes. The master felt more secure than when he left the home of David Cable earlier in the night. Elias Droom said at parting:

"I don't like your attitude toward Mrs. C. It's not very manly to make war on a woman."

"My good Elias," said Bansemer, complacently surveying himself in the small mirror across the stall, "all men make war on women, one way or another."

He did not see Droom's ugly scowl as he preceded that worthy through the doorway.

The next morning Bansemer walked down the Drive.

It was a bright, crisp day and the snow had been swept from the sidewalks. He felt that a visit from Harbert during the day was not unlikely and he wanted to be fresh and clear-headed. Halfway down he met Jane Cable coming from the home of a friend. He never had seen her looking so beautiful, so full of the joy of living. Her friendly, sparkling smile sent a momentary pang of shame into his calloused heart, but it passed with the buoyant justification of his decision to do nothing in the end that might mar his son's happiness.

She was walking to town and assured him that she rejoiced in his distinguished company. They discussed the play and the supper party.

"Now that I'm engaged to Graydon, I'm positively beginning to grow sick of people," Miss Cable declared —and as they all declare at that age and stage.

"Well, you'll soon recover," he smiled. "Marriage is the convalescence of a love affair, you know."

"Oh, but most of the men one meets are so hopelessly silly—tiresome," she went on. "It's strange, too. Nearly all of them have gone to college—Yale, or Harvard."

"My dear Jane, they are the unfortunate sons of the rich. You can't blame them. All Yale and Harvard men are not tiresome. You should not forget that a large sprinkling of the young men you meet at the pink teas were sent to Yale or Harvard for the sole purpose of becoming Yale and Harvard men—nothing more. Their mothers never expected them to be anything else. The poor man sends his son to be educated;

the rich man usually does it to get the boy away from home, so that he won't have to look at him all the time. I'm happy to say that I was quite poor when Graydon got his diploma."

"Oh, Graydon isn't at all like the others. He is a man," cried Jane, her eyes dancing.

"I don't mean to say that all rich men's sons are failures. Some of them are really worth while. Give credit unlimited to the rich man's son who goes to college and succeeds in life in spite of his environment. I must not forget that Graydon's chief ambition at one time was to hunt Indians."

"He couldn't have got that from his mother," said she accusingly. Bansemer looked at her sharply. He had half expected, on meeting her, to observe the first sign that the Cable family had discussed him well but not favourably. Her very brightness convinced him that she, at least, had not been taken into the consultation.

"I am afraid it came from his horrid father. But Graydon is a good boy. He couldn't long follow the impulses of his father. I dare say he could be a sinner if he tried, too. I hate an imbecile. An imbecile to my mind is the fellow without the capacity to err intentionally. God takes care of the fellow who errs ignorantly. Give me the fellow who is bright enough to do the bad things which might admit him to purgatory in good standing, and I'll trust him to do the good things that will let him into heaven. I often wonder where these chaps go after they die—I mean the Yale and Harvard chaps who bore you. It takes a clever chap to have any standing at all in purga-

tory. Where do they go, Jane? You are wise for your years and sex. There surely must be a place for the plain asses?"

"Oh," said she, "I suppose they have a separate heaven, just as the dogs have."

"No doubt you're right," he agreed, smiling, "but think how bright the dogs are as a rule."

"Bobby Rigby says a dog is worth more than his master. People will steal a dog, he says."

"I saw him at your house last night. Did you meet Mr. Harbert?"

"No. Mother said he came in with Bobby."

"How is Mrs. Cable this morning? I think she—er—complained of a sick headache last night?"

"She has such a frightful headache that she couldn't get up this morning."

"Indeed? Will you carry my respects and sympathy to her?"

"Thank you, yes. But why don't you come in and see us, Mr. Bansemer?"

"In a day or so, gladly."

Bansemer was not approached by Harbert that day nor the next—nor any other day soon, in fact. It was not until after the third day had expired that he heard from Mrs. Cable. Her silence was gratifying and significant; it meant that she was struggling with herself—that she had taken no one as yet into her confidence. He was too wary to feel secure in his position, however. He abandoned every case that could not be tried in the cleanest light and he destroyed his footprints in those of the past more completely than ever.

David Cable was disposed to be agreeable when they met, and Rigby's manner had lost the touch of aloofness. Altogether the situation did not look so dark as it had on the night of the blizzard.

He guessed at Mrs. Cable's frame of mind during the three days just past by the tenor of her message over the telephone. She did no more than to ask him to drop in before five for a cup of tea; but he saw beyond the depth of her invitation.

He went and had a few minutes alone with her because he was shrewd enough to drop in before five. No one else came until after that hour had struck. He was studiously reserved and considerate. There was nothing in his manner to indicate that he was there as anything more than the most casual sipper of the beverage that society brews. It was left for her to make the advances.

"We must come to an understanding," she said abruptly. "I cannot endure the suspense, the uncertainty——"

Bansemer raised his brows with grave condescension. "Then you have not confessed to Mr. Cable?" he asked, with perfect unconcern. "Do you know, I was rather hoping that you would have saved me the trouble of doing so."

"It means so much to——"

"Ah, I see you find it hard to lose the ground you have gained socially." He stirred his tea steadily.

"It isn't that—I don't care for that. It's for Jane and David. I can only offer to buy your silence; nothing more," she said with hurried words. "I own

shares in the railroad; they're worth twenty thousand dollars. Will you take them?"

"My dear," he said, leaning quite close to her, "I am not seeking to blackmail you as you seem to imagine. I have only tried to tell you that I love you."

"Oh," she exclaimed, with a shudder of disgust. His face was quite close to hers; she could feel his warm breath on her cheek and she drew away quickly. His hand hovered close to hers as it lay in her lap.

There was an eye-witness to this single picture in the brief scene. Jane had started downstairs. From the upper steps she could look into the drawing-room below. She could not help seeing Bansemer's fervent attitude; she heard nothing that he said. The girl paused in surprise; a feeling as of dread—she could not explain—crept over her. A chill struck into her heart. It was as if she had awakened from a sweet sleep to look out upon a bleak, horrid morning.

Involuntarily she shrank back, quite beyond the actual vision but not free from it. She stood straight and tense and silent at the top of the stairs, her hand clasping the rail. She could hear her heart throbs plainly. There was no mistaking the picture as it had burst upon her unsuspecting eyes. With a quavering smile she tried to throw it from her. But cold and damning there arose to support her apprehensions the horrid stories of Mrs. Blanckton and her affair with Rellick. With her own eyes she had seen Rellick talking to Mrs. Blanckton just as Bansemer was talking to her mother in the dim doom below. The Blanckton scandal, as everyone knew, was one of the most infamous the city

had known. Jane, with other girls, had been shocked by the boldness of the intrigue; she had loathed Rellick for his unprincipled love-making; she had despised and denounced Mrs. Blanckton. Here now was her own mother listening just as Mrs. Blanckton had listened; here was James Bansemer talking just as Rellick had talked. A great fear, a dark uncertainty, welled up in her heart.

It was not until the butler admitted other callers that she found the courage to turn her eyes toward the drawing-room. She was never to forget the dread that grew with the thought of what she might have seen had she remained a voluntary witness during the minutes which followed her first look below. That single vision effected a sharp, complete change in Jane Cable's life. From that moment she never saw the world as it had appeared to her before.

Although she succeeded in hiding the fact, it was difficult to approach and greet James Bansemer with the naturalness of the unsuspecting. His manner was beyond reproach, and yet, for the first time, she saw the real light in his black eyes. She talked to him as if nothing had happened to make her distrustful, but no self-control in the world could have checked the growth of that remorseless thing called suspicion. For her own sake, for her mother's, for Graydon's, she tried to put it down. Instead, it grew greater and stronger as she looked into his eyes, for in them she saw the light that heretofore had escaped her notice.

And this was the father of the man whom she was to marry, the one whom she loved with all her heart

and soul! This, the man who would degrade her own mother! Her mother—she looked at her with a new question in her eyes. She looked for the thing which had marked Mrs. Blanckton. It was not there, and she rejoiced in that discovery. Her mother did not possess the bold, daring, defiant air of the other woman. Hers was tender, sweet, even subdued; the girl clutched hopefully at this sign and began to build upon it.

Half a dozen people came and went. James Bansemer was the last to leave. He met the girl's tense, inquiring look from time to time, but he could not have felt its meaning. There was nothing in her voice which might have warned him, although it sounded strained and without warmth on her own ears. In spite of herself she wondered how he would act in saying good-bye to her mother. Although she tried with all the might of her will to look away, she could not take her eyes from the pair as Bansemer arose to depart.

His manner was most circumspect. The handclasp was brief, even formal and there was no look in his eyes to indicate the presence of anything but the most casual emotions. After his departure, Mrs. Cable turned to Jane and complained of a frightful headache and went to her room to lie down for a while before dinner. Jane's gaze followed her steadily as she ascended the stairs. Then she walked to the window and looked out upon the street, a hundred perplexities in her mind.

Her father was standing in the middle of the sidewalk, looking down the darkening street. His cab was turning the corner below, showing that he had been stand-

ing there for longer than a minute. She watched him with interest. What had happened in the street to hold his interest so closely? It was Jane who opened the door and let him in. As she kissed his cold cheek she noticed the frown on his brow and caught the strange gleam in his eyes. His greeting was less warm than usual, and he went to his room upstairs without removing his hat or coat below. But not before he sent a quick, keen glance about the drawing-room to find if James Bansemer had been the single visitor of the afternoon.

"Where is your mother?" he asked from the stairs, without looking back.

"She has just gone to her room," Jane replied, a chill shooting through her veins. Some strange, unnatural impulse compelled her to add, as if the explanation were just and necessary: "We have had a lot of people in drinking tea, and mother has a headache."

She watched him ascend the steps and turn into his smoking-room. The door closed sharply and a wave of inexplicable relief rushed over her. Her hands were cold. She went to the fireplace and held them out to the blaze. Her ears were alert for sounds from above —alert with a strange fear which choked her with its persistence. She dreaded the opening of her father's door and his footsteps as they crossed to her mother's room. She waited for these sounds, minute after minute, but they did not come. The fire would not give warmth to her hands; the chill seemed to spread. In her new consciousness she felt that a tragedy was just begun.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CANKER

Cable saw Bansemer leave the house as he drove up to the curb in front. The lawyer did not look back, but turned the nearest corner as if eager to disappear from sight as quickly as possible.

Closing the door of his smoking-room behind him, David Cable dropped wearily into a chair without removing his hat or coat. His blood was running cold through his veins, his jaw was set and his eyes had the appearance of one who has been dazed by a blow. For many minutes he sat and stared at the andirons in the ember-lit grate. From time to time he swallowed painfully and his jaw twitched. Things began growing black and green before his eyes; he started up with an oath.

He was consumed by the fires of jealousy and suspicion. The doubt that had found lodging in his mind so recently now became a cruel certainty. Into his grim heart sprang the rage of the man who finds himself deceived, despised, dishonoured. He was seeing with his own eyes, no doubt, just what others had seen for months—had seen and had pitied or scorned him as the unfortunate dupe. With the thought of it he actually ground his teeth; tears of rage and mortification sprang to his eyes. He recalled his own feelings

in instances where shame had fallen upon other men; he recalled his own easy indifference and the temptation to laugh at the plight of the poor devils. It had never entered his mind that some day he might be the object of like consideration in others more or less fortunate, according to *their* friends.

By the time dinner was announced he had succeeded in restoring himself to a state of comparative calmness. He did not dress for dinner, as was his custom, nor did he stop to ask Frances Cable if she were ready to go down. He heard Jane playing the piano as he descended. She nodded to him, but did not stop and he paused near the fireplace to look at her strangely. Somewhere back in his brain there was struggling, unknown to him, the old-time thought that this child bore him no likeness whatsoever. He only knew he was crushing down the fear that evil or slander or pain might come to her, if he were rash yet just. He was wondering if he could face his wife without betraying himself.

Jane played softly, lifelessly. She, on the other hand, was wondering what Graydon would think or say, if she spoke to him of what she had seen. She wondered if he would blame her mother as she was beginning to blame his father.

"Mother won't be down to dinner," she finally said.

"Is she ill?" he asked after a moment.

"She is lying down. Margaret will take some tea up to her."

Father and daughter had but little to say to each other during the meal. Their efforts at conversation

were perfunctory, commonplace, an unusual state of affairs of which neither took notice.

"You look tired, father. Has it been a hard day?"

"A rather trying one, Jane. We're having some trouble with the blizzards out West. Tying up everything that we are rushing to the Philippines."

"Is it settled that you are to be made president?"

"It looks like it." There followed a long silence. "By the way, I have good news for you. Mr. Clegg told me to-day that they are going to take Graydon into the firm. Isn't it great? Really, it is quite remarkable. You are not the only person, it seems, who thinks a lot of that boy."

"A partner? Really? Oh, isn't it glorious? I knew he could—I told him he'd be a partner before long." She waited a moment and then added: "His father was here to-day for a cup of tea." Cable caught the slightly altered tone and looked up. She was trifling with her fork, palpably preoccupied.

"I'm—I'm sorry I missed him," said he, watching her closely.

"You like him very much, don't you, father?"

"Certainly—and I'm sure your mother does." The fork shook in her fingers and then dropped upon the plate. She looked up in confusion. Cable's eyes were bent upon her intently and she had never seen so queer a light in them. Scarcely more than the fraction of a second passed before he lowered his gaze, but the mysterious telegraphy of the mind had shot the message of comprehension from one to the other. He saw with horror that the girl at least suspected the true

situation. A moment later he arose abruptly and announced that he would run up to see her mother before settling down to some important work in his den.

"Graydon is coming over to-night," she said. "We'll be very quiet and try not to disturb you. Don't work too hard, daddy dear."

Upstairs Frances Cable was battling with herself in supreme despair. Confession was on her lips a dozen times, but courage failed her. When she heard his footsteps in the hallway she was ready to cry out the truth to him and end the suspense. As he opened the door to enter, the spirit of fairness turned frail and fled before the appeal of procrastination. Wait! Wait! Wait! cried the powerful weakness in her heart, and it conquered. She could not tell him then. To-morrow—the next day, yes, but not then. It was too much to demand of herself, after all.

He came in, but left a few minutes later. She was strangely unresponsive to his tender inquiries. Her thoughts were of another, was his quick conclusion as he fled from her presence before the harsh accusations could break from his eyes.

In his den once more, with the door closed, he gave himself up completely to black thoughts. He recalled his words to her, uttered years ago, half in jest and half in earnest; he had horrified her beyond expression by telling her how he would punish a wife if he were the husband she deceived. With a grim, lurid smile he remembered the penalty. He had said he would not kill; he would disfigure the woman frightfully and permit her to live as a moral example to other wives.

Slitting her mouth from ear to ear or cutting off her nose—these were two of the penalties he would inflict. He now felt less brutal. He might kill, but he would not disfigure. For an hour he sat and wondered what had been the feelings of his old friend George Driscoll just before he deliberately slew his faithless wife. He remembered saying to other friends at the time that Driscoll had "done right."

This night of black shadows—he did not sleep at all—was really the beginning of the end. He forgot the presidency that was to be handed out to him; he forgot everything but the horrid canker that gnawed into his heart and brain.

Day and night he writhed in silent agony, a prey to the savage jealousy that grew and grew until it absorbed all other emotions. Scandal, divorce, dishonour, murder swept before the mind of this man who had been of the people and who could not condone. The people kill.

For a week he waited and watched and suffered. What he knew of men told him that they do not devote themselves to the wives of others with honourable motives behind them. He convinced himself that he knew the world; he had seen so much of it. The man aged years in that single week of jealousy and suspense. His face went haggard, his eyes took on a strange gleam, his manner was that of a man in grave trouble.

Day after day this piteous, frenzied man who swayed thousands with his hand stooped to deal with the smallest movements of one man and one woman. Despite his most intense desire to drive himself into other and

higher channels, he found himself skulking and spying and conniving with but one low end in view.

He employed every acute sense in the effort to justify his suspicions. Time and again he went home at unusual hours, fearing all the while that he might incur the pain of finding Bansemer there. He even visited the man in his office, always rejoicing in the fact that he found him there at the time. He watched the mail in the morning; he planned to go out of nights and then hurried home deliberately but unexpectedly. Through it all he said no word to Frances Cable or Jane. He asked no questions, but he was being beaten down by apprehensions all the while.

His wife's manner convinced him that all was not well with her. She avoided being alone with him, keeping close to her room; he detected a hundred pretexts by which she managed to escape his simplest advances.

At last, overwrought by the strain, he began to resort to cunning—this man who was big enough to have gone from the engine cab to the president's office. It required hours of struggle with his fairer, nobler nature to bring himself low enough to do trickery, but the natal influence mastered. He despised himself for the trick, but he *would know the truth.*

The late afternoon mail one day brought to Mrs. Cable a brief letter, typewritten both inside and out. David Cable saw her open and read the missive and he saw her trembling hand go to her throat and then to her temple. Her back was towards him. He could not see her face until she turned, a full minute later. Then it was calm and undisturbed, but her eyes were

brilliant. He ground his teeth and tore upstairs without a word. David Cable had stooped low enough to write this letter and he was paying for it.

He knew the contents far better than she knew them. The letter purported to be an urgent appeal from James Bansemer, asking her to meet him at eight o'clock that night. It said: "I must see you to-night. Leave your home at 8:00 o'clock for a short call on Mrs. W——, just around the corner. I will meet you across the Drive, near the sea wall. It is quite dark there. J."

David Cable did not know that earlier in the afternoon James Bansemer had called her up by 'phone to say that he intended to speak to his son the following day, unless word came to him from her; nor, could he have possibly known that she was now determined to tell the whole story to her husband and to trust to his mercy. He only knew that he had written the letter and that he had told her of his intention to go downtown immediately after dinner.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRAGEDY AT THE SEA WALL

The dark, muffled figure of a man leaned against a section of the old wall that edged the lake—the figure of a man who prayed with all his soul that his vigil might be in vain. If she came, all was over.

He was not armed. He had thrown his revolver away a week before. His only desire now was to learn the extent of her duplicity. If she obeyed the call of the letter then there could be no doubt that she was coming at the call of the lover. His hands twitched and he shivered as if with a dreadful chill. His heart was shouting a warning to her, but his head was urging her to come and have done with it all.

He was there early—long before the hour named in the decoy. His eyes never left the sidewalk that ran past his own home, but a short distance from the Drive. They stared without blinking across that dark border, through the circle of light from the arc lamp and far into the shadows of blackness beyond. It was very dark where he stood. The lake had battered through the sea wall for many rods at this particular point and no one ventured out beyond the bridle path for fear of slipping down into the cavities that had been washed out by the waves. His station was on the edge of the piles of stone and cement that had been tossed up to await the pleasure of the park commissioners.

For a while, he tried to take Jane's future into consideration, but it was impossible to substitute anything before his own wrongs. David Cable was not the kind of man who would go on living with a faithless wife for the sake of appearances. He was not an apologist. Time and circumstance and the power of true love would adjust the affair of Jane and Graydon Bansemer. This was *his* affair. Time could not adjust it for him.

At last he saw a woman's figure hurrying down the street. The wild, eager hope that the light from the electric lamp would prove it to be other than that of his wife was quickly dispelled. His worst fears were true, His Frances—his wife of more than a score of years, his pretty sweetheart through all those days, was false to him! As he fell back against the wall something seemed to snap in his breast; a groan of misery arose to his lips.

With eyes which saw red with rage and anguish, he watched the hesitating approach of the woman. She stopped at the corner and looked up and down the Drive, peering intently into the dark shadows by the lake. The sky was overcast; no stars peeped through its blackness. With uncertain, halting steps she crossed the boulevard, still glancing about as if in search of someone. He moved forward unconsciously, almost blindly, and she caught a glimpse of his tall, dark figure. He was not unlike Bansemer in height and carriage. As she drew near, his legs trembled and tears of despair flooded his eyes.

A savage desire to grasp her by the throat and hurl her into the waters beyond the break came over him

with irresistible power. Then came the pitiable collapse which conquered the murderous impulses and left him weak and broken for the moment. With a sob he turned and leaned upon the wall, his back to her, his face buried in his tense arms—crushed, despised, dishonoured! Kill her? The horror of it swept his brain clear for an instant. Kill his pretty Frances? Kill Jane's mother? How could he think of it?

It was a long time before the wretched man knew that she was standing close behind him and was speaking to him. The sound of her voice came through the noise of his pounding heart as if it were far away and gentle. But what was it that she was saying? Her voice was angry, suppressed, condemning.

"You may take it or refuse it, just as you please," were the first words his turbulent senses distinguished. "I can pay no more than that for your silence. The other is impossible. I will not discuss it again with you." She paused as if waiting for him to respond.

"To-night I shall tell my husband everything—the whole story. I cannot endure the suspense any longer. I will not live in fear of you another hour. My only reason for coming out here to-night is to plead with you to spare your son and Jane. I am not asking anything for myself. It would break Jane's heart if Graydon should refuse to marry her. You must have a heart somewhere in that——" But the words became jumbled in the ears of her listener. From time to time his mind grasped such sentences as these, paralysing in their bitterness: "I have the letters of adoption. . . . David will not believe what you say. . . . He

loves me and he loves Jane. . . . I am willing to pay all that I have to keep it from Graydon and Jane. . . . But I intend to tell my husband. I will not deceive him any longer. . . . He will understand even though he should hate me for it. He will love Jane although she is not his own child."

David Cable seemed frozen to the spot. His brain was clearing; he was grasping the full importance of every sentence that rushed from her impassioned lips. The last appalling words fell like the blow of a club in the hands of a powerful man. He was dazed, stunned, senseless. It seemed to him that his breath had ceased to come and that his whole body had turned to stone. His wide staring eyes saw nothing ahead of him.

"Well, what have you to say?" she was demanding. "Why have you asked me to come out here? You have my final answer. What have you to say? Are you going to tell Graydon that Jane is not our child? I must know."

"Not our child?" came from the palsied lips of David Cable, so low and lifeless that the sound was lost in the swish of the water below. The intermittent red signal in the lighthouse far out in the lake blinked back at him, but to him it was a steady, vivid glare.

"Do you hear me? I have lied to my husband for the last time!" There was almost a tone of victory in the voice, now. "Do you hear me? You don't dare! David will not believe you—he will believe my——"

A terrible oath choked back the hopeful words in the woman's throat. Murder had come back into the man's heart.

"You lie!"

"David!"

"Yes, it's David! Liar! Whose child is she? Tell me?"

"David! David! For God's sake, hear me! There was no wrong, I swear it!"

"She's not my child and there's no wrong!" The sardonic laugh that followed was that of a raging maniac. "You've fooled me, you fiend! You devil!"

At that word and with one look at her husband's terribly distorted features, Frances Cable shrank back with a single terrified cry, turned from him and fled madly for her life. With the spring of the wild beast, Cable rushed after her, cursing her with every breath. In a few yards he had almost reached her, his hands outstretched to grasp her neck. But, at that instant, the frightened woman's strength suddenly gave way; her knees received the fall of the limp body. For a second she seemed huddled in a posture of prayer, then toppled over, slipped easily forward through a fissure in the wall and plunged headforemost into the chugging waters below.

In the lives even of the best of men there are moments when the human instincts are annihilated and supplanted by those of the beast. Likewise, have there been instances in which the bravest have been tried in the furnace and found wanting, while conversely, the supposedly cowards have proved to be heroes. Therefore, since no two situations can occur at a different time and yet have precisely similar conditions, it be-

hooves us to forbear judging, lest we be judged, and to approach the following incident in this man's career as if we ourselves dwelt under a covering of glass.

From the time of his marriage up to this moment no man could have fought better the bitter struggle of life than David Cable; yet, now, in this hour—his hour of travail and temptation, he piteously succumbed. Cowardice, the most despicable of all emotions, held him in her grasp.

He sank exhausted against the wall, his eyes fixed upon the black hole through which his wife had disappeared; then, the stony glare changed suddenly to a look of realisation—horrible, stupefying. He crept to the edge and peered intently into the water, not six feet below, his eyes starting from his head.

Black, sobbing water, darkness impenetrable! The instinctive fear of apprehension caused him to look in every direction for possible eye-witnesses. Every drop of blood in his body seemed turned to ice with horror. Down there in that black, chill water lay the body of his wife, the woman he had loved through all these trying years, and he her murderer!

Terrified, trembling, panting, he tried to force himself into the water with the vague hope of saving her, after all; but even as he looked wildly about for help, a shout ready to spring from his dry throat, the natural dread of the accused facing his accuser took possession of him. Fear, abject fear, held him in grasp; he could not shout.

A man was running across the drive towards him—a long loping figure that covered the ground rapidly.

With a last horrified look in the water, David Cable, craven for the moment, turned and fled through the night along the broken sea wall—fled aimlessly, his eyes unseeing, his feet possessed of wings. He knew not whither he ran, only that he was an assassin fleeing from the horrors behind.

Over the narrow strip of ground sped the long, eager figure that had darted from the shadow of the homes across the street. In hoarse, raucous tones he shouted after the fleeing man:

"Stop! Wait! Halt!"

He dashed up to the spot where he had seen two figures but a moment before, the full horror of what had happened striking him for the first time. The man was Elias Droom, and he had been an eye-witness to the dim, indistinct tragedy at the sea wall.

His presence is easily explained. He knew of Bansemer's telephone message to Mrs. Cable, together with his threat to expose her on the following morning. It was only natural that she should make a final plea—that night, of course. The old clerk realised the danger of an encounter between his employer and his victim at a time so intense as this. He could not know that Bansemer would visit the Cable home that evening, but he suspected that such would be the case. It was his duty to prevent the meeting, if possible.

Bansemer would go too far, argued the old man; he must be stopped. That is why he lurked in the neighbourhood to turn Bansemer back before he could enter the home of David Cable.

He saw Mrs. Cable leave the house and go towards

the lake. Following some distance behind he saw her cross the Drive and make her way to the sea wall. Slinking along in the shadow of the buildings, cursing his luck and Bansemer jointly, he saw the two forms come together out there by the lake.

"Too late, curse him for a fool," Droom had muttered to himself. "He ought to know this is bad business just now. She's come out to meet him, too. Worse. It's my duty to look out for him as long as he employs me. I'm doing my best and I can't help it if he betrays himself. I'd like to see him——but I can't go back on him while I'm taking money from him. Look at that!"

He chuckled softly as he saw the two figures approach each other. For all that he knew they might be contemplating a fond and loving embrace, and he was not undeceived until he saw one of the figures separate itself, run from the other and go plunging to the earth. As he started up in surprise, the other figure leaned forward and then straightened itself quickly. Droom did not hesitate. He dashed across the street, conscious that something dreadful had happened. His instant thought was that Bansemer had lost his temper and had struck the woman down.

The flight of the man was proof positive. He called him to stop, certain that it was Bansemer. The runner turned his face towards him for a moment. The light from the street may have deceived Elias Droom's eyes, but the face of the assailant was not that of James Bansemer. Droom stopped short and looked after the man, paralysed with amazement. Then he gave a snort-

ing laugh at his own stupidity; of course, it was Bansemer. Who else could it be?

Arriving at the spot where he had last seen the couple, he was amazed to find no one there. He realised, with horror, that the woman must have been struck down; had fallen or had been thrown into the lake.

The gaunt old clerk groaned bitterly as he threw himself upon the wall and peered over into the water. He listened for the cries and struggles of the woman. Gradually his eyes solved the situation. He saw the row of piles beyond the break in the sea wall and the swishing pool inside. Every incoming wave sent a flood of water between the sturdy posts and into the cut of the wall.

Without a moment's hesitation he dropped into this seething prison, confident that the woman's body could be found there. A single glance had shown him that he could crawl upward through the break to safety and he knew that the water below was not dangerously deep.

A minute later he was scrambling out of this angry, icy water, up through the fissure, bearing in his long arms the inert form of Frances Cable. He had found her half-submerged in the pool, every sweep of the waves through the sieve-like posts covering her completely.

He dropped the body on the ground after reaching the level and took a quick shuddering glance about. Two men had stopped on the opposite of the Drive. He hesitated a second and then shouted to them. They stood stockstill in alarm. Before they could respond to

his second shout, Elias Droom was tearing the woman's watch from her belt and the rings from her fingers. His strong, nervous hands found the necklace that she wore and it broke beneath their sudden jerk. Cunningly he tossed the necklace upon the ground and trampled it with his heel. The watch and rings went flying across the wall and far out into the lake.

"This woman has been slugged!" he shouted. He did not know how much of the tragedy these men had witnessed. Boldness was his cue for the moment; stealth could follow later. "She's been in the water. I'm afraid it's murder. The man who did it went that way. Yell for the police!"

If the assailant was James Bansemer, Droom was doing his duty by him. If it was another, he was doing his duty by society.

CHAPTER XVI

HOURS OF TERROR

Droom's intentions were clear. It was not a tender heart nor was it chivalry which prompted him to do the deed of valour just described. He had started out to do his duty by James Bansemer because he was in his hire; and he felt it still his duty to cover the tracks of his master as best he could. He knew that he was jeopardising his own safety; the obstinate cunning of his nature insisted that the man he had watched was Bansemer, although his brief glimpse of the fugitive's face discouraged that belief.

The gaunt clerk kept his chin well covered with his great muffler; the broad collar of his ulster was turned up about his face. The rapid plan that dashed into his mind comprehended but two things: the effort to restore life to Frances Cable and the hope of escaping without being recognised. He felt that she had not been in the water long enough to drown; every hope depended upon the force of the blow that he imagined had been delivered.

Chilled to the bone, his teeth chattering like castanets, the old man was stooping over the inanimate form on the ground when the two men came up. In answer to their startled questions, he merely said that he had seen the struggle from across the street, but had been too late to prevent the tragedy.

"We must get her into one of these houses quick," he grunted. "Take hold of her, you. And *you* over there hurry and ring a doorbell. Get inside and 'phone for a doctor—a doctor first and then the police. We may be able to save her life."

The first of the rich men's homes denied them admission. The man of the house said he would not "stand for the notoriety." Droom, supporting the head of the wet, icy figure, made a remark which the man was never to forget. At the second house they were admitted.

In an instant all was confusion. A card game was broken up and guests of the house assisted their host and hostess in doing all manner of unnecessary things. Droom gave the commands which sooner or later resolved themselves into excited, wrathy demands upon the telephone operator, calls for a certain near-by doctor, calls for the police, calls for stimulants, maids, hot water bottles—everything.

"She's been robbed," said one of the men. "Her rings have been torn off. Look at the blood!"

"She's well-dressed, too," said another. "Say, her face looks familiar——"

To the amazement of everyone, the lips of the woman parted and a gasping, choking sound issued from between them, a slight shudder swept over her frame.

"She's alive!" exclaimed Droom. "Get these wet clothes off of her—quick!"

The men stood grouped in the hallway while the women tore the wet garments from the reviving victim and prepared a warm bed for her. Elias Droom was

edging towards the door, bent on escape, when the awed, chattering voice of the young fellow who had assisted in carrying her to the house arrested him. A great sense of relief crept over him as he listened to the young man's story; his eyes blinked with satisfaction. He was forgetting his own remark of a minute ago that he was freezing and must get into some dry clothes at once. The young man was saying:

"It happened right out there by the sea wall—where the big break is. Harry and I were coming up the Drive and I called attention to a man running south along the wall. Just then, this gentleman ran over from this side of the street and, a minute or two later, we saw him jump into the break over there. Suicide, I thought, but he wasn't a minute coming up. There was the woman! He'd pulled her out! By thunder, it was the bravest thing I ever saw! He——"

And then it was that everybody began to shower praise upon the man who only had tried to do his duty by the one who hired him to do ugly, not gallant, deeds.

"Did you watch which way the robber ran?" demanded Droom eagerly.

"Lost him in the dark. He ran like fury. You must have scared him off," said the second young man. "I wish we could have seen his face. Did you see it?"

"Not distinctly," answered Droom. "He struck me as being a slim young fellow, that's all." Of one thing he was assured: the evidence of these two men would prove that he had acted as a valiant protector and not as a thug—a fear which had not left his mind until now. They had seen the fleeing assailant, but there

was only one person who could identify him. That person was Frances Cable, the victim. If it was not James Bansemer, then who could it have been?

The door opened and an agitated young woman came out.

"It is Mrs. Cable," she cried in trembling tones.

The physician arrived at that moment, and a few minutes later came an officer who had been hailed from the doorway. While the policeman was listening to the voluble young eye-witnesses, Droom stood aloof, puzzling himself vainly in the effort to solve an inside mystery. He had been ready, a few minutes before, to curse himself for pulling the woman out of the water, but now, as the belief grew stronger within him that her assailant was not James Bansemer, his viewpoint changed. If such was the case, there would be no need to fear Mrs. Cable's story if she revived sufficiently to tell it. On the other hand, if it was Bansemer, he had rescued her to an ill purpose. He was conscious finally that someone was speaking to him.

"What do you know of this?" demanded the policeman. Droom repeated his brief story. "What is your name and where do you live?"

"My name is Elias Droom and I live over in Wells Street."

"Could you identify the man?"

"I don't think so."

"What were you doing over in this part of town?"

"Walking up to see the skaters on the park lagoon. But what's that got to do with it? You'd better be

out looking for the thief instead of wasting time on me here," snarled Droom. The officer gasped and there is no telling what might have happened, if the captain and a swarm of bluecoats had not appeared on the scene at that moment. Two minutes later they were off scouring the lake front in search of the mysterious hold-up man. Two plain-clothes men remained to question the witnesses and to inspect the neighbourhood in which the crime was committed.

Word came from the inner room that Mrs. Cable was regaining consciousness.

"Does—can she throw any light on the affair?" asked Elias Droom.

"She has uttered no word except her husband's name. I think she is still calling upon him for help, poor thing," said the young woman who bore the news.

"Cable ought to be notified," said one of the men.

"Don't do it over the 'phone," said Droom quickly. "I'm going past his house. I'll stop in and tell him. Let me out, officer; I must get out of these wet garments. I'm an old man, you know."

The probable solution had come to Droom like a flash. As he hurried up the street his mind was full of the theory. He scarcely could wait for the door of David Cable's house to be opened in response to his vigorous ringing. The maid announced that Mr. and Mrs. Cable were out. It was enough for Droom. He put the puzzle together in that instant. David Cable's face was the one he had seen; not James Bansemer's. The maid set up a hysterical shrieking when he bluntly told her of the mishap to her mistress, but he did not

wait to answer questions. He was off to find James Bansemer. The volcano he had been watching so long was about to burst, and he knew it.

Forgetting his wet garments, he entered a drug store and telephoned to Bansemer's home. His employer answered the call so readily that Droom knew he had not been far from the instrument that evening. There was a note of disappointment in his voice when Droom's hoarse tones replied to his polite: "Hello!"

"I'll be over in half an hour," said Droom. "Very important business. Is Graydon there?"

"He's just gone to Cable's. Someone telephoned for him a minute or so ago. What's wrong? Do you know?"

"I'll be there in fifteen minutes," was all that Droom would say.

Elias' memory could not carry him back to the time when he had hired a cab. A cab was one of the luxuries he had not cultivated. One can only imagine his surprise, then, when he found himself hailing a passing hansom; and greater the surprise he must have felt when he clambered in and ordered the driver to go in a gallop to a certain place in Wells Street. Ten minutes later he was attired in dry, warm clothes and in the cab again, bound for Bansemer's home. What he said to James Bansemer on that memorable occasion need not be repeated. It is only necessary to say that his host was bitterly impressed and willing to admit that the developments might prove serious. They could only speculate as to what had transpired between David Cable and his wife out there by the sea wall, but it

was enough for them to know that a crisis was at hand.

"We'll see what the morning papers say about the affair," said Bansemer, uneasy and cold.

The morning papers were full of the sensational robbery, the prominence of the victim and the viciousness of the attack. Elias Droom read the accounts eagerly as he breakfasted in the dingy little restaurant near his home, bright and early. He grinned appreciably over the share of glory that fell to him; and he actually cackled over the new developments in the great mystery.

He had observed with relief that the name of James Bansemer was not mentioned. The reports from the bedside of the robber's victim were most optimistic. She was delirious from the effects of the shock, but no serious results were expected. The great headlines on the first page of the paper he was reading set his mind temporarily at rest. There was no suggestion of truth in them.

The reader of this narrative, who knows the true facts in the case, is doubtless more interested in the movements and emotions of David Cable than in the surmises of others. It would be difficult, for a certainty, to ask one to put himself in Cable's place and to experience the sensations of that unhappy man as he fled along the dark shore of the lake. Perhaps much will be taken on faith if the writer simply says that the fugitive finally slunk from the weeds and refuse of what was then called "The District of Lake Michigan"—"Streeterville," in local parlance—to find himself panting and terror-struck in the bleak east end of Chicago

Avenue. It was not until then that he secured control of his nerves and resorted to the stealth and cunning of the real criminal.

From that time until he stood shivering and white with dogged intention in a theatre foyer, bent upon establishing an alibi, his movements are scarcely worth the details. Between the acts he saw a dozen men whom he knew and he took drinks with several of them. His tremendous will power carried him through the ordeal in a way that could not have fallen to the good fortunes of the ordinary lawbreaker.

Every second of the time his thoughts were of the thing which was being buffeted by the icy waters of the lake. Where was that thing now? How far out into the lake had it been carried?

His body was covered with the cold perspiration of dread and horror. His soul was moaning; his whole being was aghast with the awfulness of the deed; he could have shrieked aloud in his madness. How he lived through the hour in that theatre he never could have told, nor could he believe that he was sitting there with all those frightful thoughts piling themselves upon him. Other people laughed and shouted with happiness; he stared and wept in his heart, and shivered and cringed and groaned within himself.

He had killed her! She had been true to him, and yet, he had taken her life—the life she had given him! He gave no thought to Jane, no thought to Bansemer; he thought only of himself as the slayer.

Would her body be recovered? What would be his excuse, what his punishment? The gallows? A thou-

sand horrors ran riot in his brain, a thousand tremors with each.

But why dwell upon the feelings of this miserable wretch? Why say more of his terror, his misery, his remorse? He held himself in the seat until the middle of the last act of the play. At last, unable to restrain himself longer, he arose and almost ran from the theatre. That instinct which no slayer can control or explain, was overpowering him; it was the instinct which attracts the murderer to the spot where his crime was committed. No man can describe or define this resistless impulse, and yet all criminology records it, clear and unmistakable. It is no less than a form of curiosity. Driven by this irresistible force, David Cable, with bravado that cost him dearly, worked his uninterrupted way to the scene of his crime. By trolley car to Chicago Avenue and, then, like a homeless dog scenting his way fearfully, to a corner not far from the break in the wall.

His legs trembled and his eyes grew wide with dread. The swish of the water came to his ears and he stood still for many minutes, listening for a cry for help from off the shore, but none came; and again skulking alongside the houses of his friends, he covered the blocks that lay between him and the magnetic rift in the wall. Near the corner, he stopped with a start of alarm.

The figure of a man could be seen standing like a statue on the very spot where he had seen her disappear. While he stood there, his heart scarcely beating, the solitary figure was joined by two others. Cable shrank

back into the dense shadows. Like a flash it occurred to him that they were searching for the body. A shriek of agony arose to his lips; but he checked it.

Far off on one of the crosstown streets a newsboy was calling an extra—hoarse, unintelligible shouts that froze his blood. He bent his ear to catch the far-away words of the boy: "All about de Nor' Side murder!" He cringed and shook under the raucous shout. He knew what it meant.

A policeman suddenly turned the corner and came toward him. The first impulse was to fly; the next was to stand and deliver himself. The resolution came with shocking unexpectedness. He would give himself up! He would admit that he had killed his wife! The words of anguish were on his lips when the policeman spoke.

"Is it you, Mr. Cable? How is she, sir?"

Cable did not hear the man, for, as he opened his lips to cry out his own guilt, a thought formed in his brain that almost staggered him with its cunning savagery. Why not let the penalty fall on James Bansemer? She had gone out to meet him! If she had not destroyed the note, it would hang James Bansemer, and James Bansemer was worse than a murderer. But even as this remarkable thought rushed into his brain, the last words of the officer began to drive it out.

"Is she going to pull through, sir?" was the next question—and he caught it vaguely.

"Pull through?" he mumbled inarticulately. He leaned against a great stone rail suddenly. Everything was leaping before his eyes.

"Good Lord, Mr. Cable—I—I forgot. Don't you know about it?" gasped the officer.

"Know what?" asked Cable, completely dazed.

"Go home at once, sir. I didn't mean to—oh, hurry, sir. Don't be worried. They say she'll be all right. Sure! She's been hurt a little, sir."

"My daughter?" demanded Cable, as keen as a razor in an instant. His heart was trying to jump from his body.

"Your wife, sir. Nothin' serious, sir. She was held up along here somewhere and robbed. They're sure to get the villain. She——"

But Cable was off like a deer for his home, racing as though on air.

Nothing else mattered now. She was alive! He could have her with him again to love as he never had loved her before.

CHAPTER XVII

DAVID CABLE'S DEBTS

Two days passed before David Cable was permitted to see his wife. During those trying hours he lived an age of agony in suspense. She had been removed to her home late on the night of the "hold-up," as the newspapers felt justified in calling it. He did not go to his office the next day—nor the next—but haunted her door, sleepless, nervous, held close by dread. A dozen times, at least, he sought admittance to her room, but was always turned away, cursing the doctor and the nurses for their interference.

His worst fear, however, was that his wife would not forgive him. Not the dread of exposure, nor his own shame or remorse—not even the punishment that the law might inflict, could be compared to the fear of what might be her life-long hatred. He grew to feel that the doctor, the nurses, the servants looked upon him with strange, unfriendly though respectful eyes. In his heart he believed that his wife had cursed him in their presence, laying bare his part in the unhappy transaction.

At last the suspense became unbearable. He had noticed a slight change in Jane's manner and at once attributed it to something his wife had said, for Jane had been allowed in the sick-room. The discovery that she was not his child had not as yet struck deep into

his understanding. In a vague sort of way he realised that she was different, now that he knew, but it was impossible for him to consider her in any other light than that of the years gone by. The time would come when the full realisation would cut into his heart more deeply than now, but at present a calamity of his own making was forcing all other troubles into the background. His greatest desire was to reach his wife's side, to know the worst that could come of his suit for forgiveness.

The evening of the second day he swore that he would see her—and alone. They admitted him and he entered trembling in every nerve. She was lying, white and haggard, in her bed, her back toward him. He paused for an instant and was certain that he saw her shudder violently. It was significant. She feared and loathed him.

"Is it you, David?" he heard her ask weakly. "At last! Oh, I was afraid that something had happened to you! That——"

He threw himself on his knees beside the bed and wept with all the pent-up bitterness and misery that was in him—and still he was afraid to speak to her. Not a word left his lips until he felt her hand in his hair—a tender, timid hand. It was then that he began pouring forth his cry for forgiveness. With a groan, he checked her own appeal for mercy.

"We can talk about Jane another time, not now," he cried. "I must know that you forgive me—I don't care for anything—nothing else in the world."

When the nurse came in a few minutes later, he was

sitting upon the edge of the bed holding her hands in his. Their faces were radiant.

"Please stay out," he said, almost gruffly.

"For just a little while," his wife added gently. The nurse hesitated a moment and then left the room.

Frances Cable told him Jane's history so far as it was known to her. He listened dully.

"She will never know her true parents," said she in the end.

"No, I suppose not," said he, looking out of the window.

"You understand, don't you, David, dear," she said feebly; "how I dreaded to have you learn the truth after all these years, and above all, how I hoped that Jane might never know. I tried every means in my power to buy James Bansemer's silence. It was not money that he wanted, it was . . . " she buried her head shamefully in her arms; after a moment, she went on: "He professes to love his son, but his is the love an animal gives the offspring it would destroy. And yet Graydon worships him."

"Are you quite sure that Graydon is as unsuspecting as you think?"

"In regard to his father?"

"In regard to Jane."

"Oh, I'm sure of it. He is not a party to his father's schemes. If James Bansemer has not already told Graydon, he never will. It is not his plan to do so; his only object has been to browbeat me into submission. David, it will all come out right in the end, won't it? You'll forgive me?"

"Yes, dear; but this man," and David Cable shook with emotion as he spoke, "will have to answer to me. There will be no more to fear," he said reassuringly; "I'll crush him as I would a snake."

"David, you must not——"

"Don't worry," he broke in; "I'll attend to him and see that no harm comes to anyone else. That man has no business among honest people."

"But, David, I was not honest with you," she confessed.

"That was a long time ago, and she's as much mine as she is yours. So, what's the odds now? It's a facer, I'll admit, but it can't be helped." It was thus that the man whose anger, only a few hours before had led him almost to crime, now readily absolved her of any blame.

"Poor child, poor child!" she moaned; "it will break her heart. She is so proud and so happy."

"Yes, she's proud. There is good blood in her. I don't wonder now that I used to think she was such a marvel. She's—she's not just the same sort of stock that we are, take it as you will."

"She never must know the truth, David."

"She's bound to find it out, dear. We'd better tell her. It will be easier for her. Bansemer's fangs must be made harmless forever. He shan't bother her. She'd better hear the story from us and not from him."

"But Graydon? She'll lose him, David."

"I'm not so sure of it. She's worthy of any man's love and we must know that Graydon loves her. I'll trust to that. But, first of all, we must put it beyond

the power of James Bansemer to injure her in any shape or form. Then, when I go after him—Graydon or no Graydon—he'll know that there is such a place as hell."

"Be rational, David. Let us take our time and think well, dear. I can't bear the thought of the story that will go out concerning me—how I deceived you about Jane for years and years. What will people think of me? What will they say?" she almost wailed.

"Frances," said he, his voice tense and earnest, "that is between you and me. I intend to say to the world, if occasion demands, that I have known from the first that Jane was not our child. That will be——"

"Oh, David, you *can't* say that," she cried joyously.

"I shall say it, dear old partner. I shall say that you took her from the asylum with my consent. There is only James Bansemer to call me a liar, and he will not dare!"

"That old man Droom, David—his clerk. The man who saved me—he knows."

"He is in the boat with his master. He *did* save you, though. I'll spare him much for that. And I have more to fear from him than you think. Frances, I am sure he saw me night before last down there at the sea wall. He knows—I am morally certain—that you were not attacked by a robber."

"But, David, I *was* robbed. My rings and my pendant were taken by someone. If Droom was the first man at my side—after you—then he must have taken them."

"I can't charge him with the theft," groaned Cable. "He saved your life and he might ruin mine. I would give anything I have to know just how much he saw of the affair. I can't account for his presence there. It seems like fate."

"It is impossible for him to accuse you, David."

"It is not impossible, I'm afraid. He may have seen me plainly."

"But I have described my assailant to the police. You do not answer the description in any particular."

In the next ten minutes the nurse came in twice to caution him against overtaxing her nerves, politely hinting that he should depart at once. There was no medicine, no nursing, no care that could have done her so much good as this hour with her husband.

"It hurt me more than I can tell you, David, when I saw that you were jealous of him. I could see it growing in you day after day, and yet I could not find the courage to make everything clear to you. Oh, how could you have suspected me of that?"

"Because I am a man and because I love you enough to care what becomes of you. I was wrong, I am happy to confess. Forgive me, dear. I can't tell you how terrible the last month has been to me. I can't tell you of the bitter thoughts I have had, nor the vicious deeds I have planned. I was almost insane. I was not accountable. I have much to pay to you in the rest of the years that I live; I have much to pay to my own conscience; and I also owe something to James Bansemer. I shall try to pay all these different debts in the coin that they call for."

"We owe something, you and I, to Jane," said she, as he arose to leave the room.

"A confession and more love than ever, Frances. I love her with all my heart. When you are stronger, we will tell her that she is not our child. We have loved her so long and so well that she can't ask for better proof of our devotion. That terrible thing at the sea wall must remain our secret, dear. To-morrow I shall begin pulling James Bansemer's fangs."

He found Graydon downstairs with Jane. A sharp look into the young man's eyes convinced him that his questions concerning Mrs. Cable and the latest news concerning the efforts to take the bandit were sincere. Cable held his hand for a long time; the firm, warm grasp was that of an honest man. As he stepped out into the night for a short walk over town he wondered, with a great pain in his heart, if Graydon Bansemer would turn from Jane when he heard the truth concerning her.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE VISIT OF HARBERT

"It's Harbert," said Elias Droom.

"Why didn't you say to him that I am busy? I don't want to see him," said his employer in a sharp undertone. Droom's long finger was on his lips, enjoining silence.

"He said that you wouldn't want to see him, but that it didn't make any difference. He'll wait, he says."

They were in the private office, with the door closed. Bansemer's face was whiter and more firmly set than ever. The ugly fighting light was in his eyes again.

"If he has come here to threaten me, I'll kill him," he said savagely.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said the clerk with what was meant to be a conciliatory smile. "Meet him squarely and hear what he has to say."

"Do you suppose she has told Cable? He may have sent Harbert here."

"Cable's hands are tied. I know too much. If I were to tell the police what I know he'd have a devil of a time getting the presidency of his road. Besides, they both owe me a vote of thanks. Didn't I have sense enough to make it look like robbery?"

"Yes, but curse your stupidity, they may charge you with the job. Nobody would believe that Cable would attempt to rob his own wife."

"But they would, in any event, decide that he had taken the rings to make it appear like robbery." There was a hard rap on the glass panel. "He's bound to see you, sir."

"Well, then, show him in!" snarled Bansemer.

"Mr. Bansemer will see you, sir," said Droom suavely, opening the door suddenly.

"Thanks," said Harbert shortly. He entered the private office and faced the lawyer, who was standing near his desk. "I've taken advantage of your invitation to drop in and see you."

"This is one of my busy days, Mr. Harbert," said Bansemer, determined to come to the point at once. "However, I hardly expected a social call from you, so it must be of a business nature. What is it?"

"It concerns your son, Mr. Bansemer. I'm here in the capacity of a physician. You must go away for his health." Harbert smiled as though he thought it a good joke. Bansemer turned red and then white.

"I don't quite appreciate your wit, sir."

"My humour, I'd suggest as a substitute. Well, to be perfectly plain, sir, your son does not know the true nature of the malady. He——"

"Do I understand you to say that he really has an ailment?" exclaimed Bansemer seriously.

"It isn't hopeless, my dear sir. My only desire is to keep him from ever finding out that he has a malady. He is sure to learn the truth if you remain here."

"Damn you, Harbert, I understand you now, and I want to say this to you: I'll not drag that boy away from this city. He's successful here and he's one of the

most promising young men in town. I'm not going to have him hounded from town to town by——"

"You don't quite understand me, sir. On the contrary, he should remain here. What I do mean to say is this: he won't feel like staying here if the truth about his father is uttered. That's the brutal way to put it, Bansemer, but you've *got to get out.*"

The two glared at each other for a full minute. Bansemer was as white as a sheet—but not with fear.

"Harbert," he said in low tones, "I've half a mind to kill you."

"Don't. You'd hang for it. There are at least a dozen members of the bar who know that I have come here to see you, and they know why, too. See here, Bansemer, you're a scoundrel to begin with. You've always been a knave. How you happen to have a son like Graydon I can't imagine. If I did not know that your wife was a noble, honest woman, it wouldn't be difficult to supply a reason for——"

"Stop! By God, you shall not say a word against my wife! I'll brain you with this weight! You——"

"I have not said a word against her—nor against your son. For her and for him I have the deepest respect. I am trying to protect the memory of one and the future of the other. Bansemer, I believe that I drove you out of New York. You escaped without exposure simply because the witnesses lost their nerve. That won't be the case here. You think you've covered your tracks nicely. You haven't. You've tripped into half a dozen traps. I don't know what your game is with the Cables, but you're base enough to take ad-

vantage of your son's position in that home. Don't interrupt! I'll soon be through. I'm a man of few words. If it were not for your son I'd swear out the warrants for you to-day on five different charges. For his sake I'm going to give you a chance. I've worked on you for three years. I swore I'd get you some time. Well, I've got you, and I'm going to cheat myself out of a whole lot of pleasure. I'm not going to smash you as I intended. Your son's friends have prevailed. To show you that I'm not bluffing, I have every bit of evidence in the Burkenday case, the Flossie Bellamy job, the widow Hensmith affair—and it was a damnable one, too—with two or three more. You broke that woman's heart. I don't suppose you know that she died last month. You never noticed it, eh? Her precious coachman is living like a lord on the money you and he took from her. Old Burkenday's housemaid has bought a little home in Edgewater—but not from her wages. The two jobs you now have on hand never will be pulled off. The girl in the Banker Watts case has been cornered and has confessed. She is ready to appear against you. McLennan's wife has had the courage to defy your accomplice—that dastardly butler of theirs—and he has left town, frightened out of his wits. Your time has come. The jig is up. It won't be as it was in New York, because we have the proof. There is a committee of three down in Rigby's office now waiting for me to report. If I take word to them that you expect to sail for Europe next week, never to return to this country, all well and good. It

is for your son's good health, bear in mind. If you go, the public may never learn the truth about you; if you stay you will be in jail before you are a week older. And, Mr. Bansemer, you've got to decide *damned quick*."

Bansemer looked his accuser straight in the eye, a faint smile of derision touching his lips, but not his eyes.

"Mr. Harbert, the first thing you have to learn in connection with your patient's father is that he is not a coward. I refuse to run, sir. I am innocent of any intentional wrong, and I'll stand my ground. My son will stand beside me, too; he is that sort. Go back to your committee and tell them that Bansemer will not go to Europe for his son's health. Good-day, sir!"

"Nonsense, Bansemer," exploded Harbert. "You know we've got you fast enough. Why be a fool as well as a knave? You haven't a ghost of a chance. I'm trying to do you a good turn."

"A good turn? Mr. Harbert, I am neither a fool nor a knave. If I were a fool I'd kill you where you stand. I would be justified in killing the man who represents a crowd of blackmailers. That's what you are, sir. I refuse to pay your price. If I were a knave I'd pay it. I want you to understand one thing. I shall stand my ground here. If you persecute me, I'll not stop flaying you until death ends my endeavours. We'll see what justice can give me in exchange for your bulldozing. I will have restitution, remember that. Now, you've nothing more to say to me. Get out!"

"Sir!"

"Get out!"

"By George, you're a wonderful bluffer."

"Do you expect me to throw you out, sir?"

"It isn't necessary. I've had a change of heart in the last minute, Mr. Bansemer. I withdraw my proposition. By all that's holy, I intend to go after you now without pity. Hang your son's feelings! You won't take my advice. I didn't give it as a friend, because I detest you. It was done in a weak spirit of fairness toward your son and toward the girl he is to marry. Now, I put them out of my consideration. They——"

"Get out!"

Harbert, very red in the face, slammed the door after him and strode angrily through the outer office into the corridor. Droom immediately entered the consultation room.

"Well? What is it?" demanded Bansemer.

"What did he want?"

"He invited me to go to Europe for an indefinite stay. I refused. We'll fight it out, Droom. We have covered our trail better than he thinks. They can't convict me. I'm sure of that. They have nothing but conjectures, and they won't go in court."

"I'm afraid of him, just the same. You're bull-headed about it. Every criminal thinks his tracks are covered until it is too late to cover them properly."

"Curse you, Droom, I'm no criminal."

"A slip of the tongue on my part. Do you know who is down there in Rigby's office with those fellows?"

"An officer, I daresay."

"No. David Cable."

"Cable? Then, his wife has told him everything. Well, I've something to tell, too. By the Lord Harry, Elias, there will be several sensations in high life."

"You don't mean that you'll tell all there is to tell about the girl?"

"No! That's just it! That is one thing I won't tell. If you tell whose blood she has in her veins, I'll kill you like a dog. But, I'll see that Miss Cable is dropped by Chicago society inside of a week. I'm mad, Droom —do you understand?"

"But Graydon loves her."

"He won't love her long. I was a fool to let him go this far—a blind, loving fool. But I'll end it now. He shan't marry her. He has no——"

"I haven't much of a heart to boast of, Bansemer, but I beg of you not to do this thing. I love Graydon. He doesn't deserve any pain or disgrace. Take my advice and leave the city. Let me call Harbert back."

"No! They can't drive me out! Telephone over and ask Graydon to stop here on his way up this afternoon."

The opening and closing of the outer door attracted their attention. Droom peeped forth. In spite of himself, Bansemer started and his eyes widened with sudden alarm. A glance of apprehension passed between the two men.

"It's that Deever boy from Judge Smith's," reported Droom.

"Tell him to get out," said Bansemer, with a breath of relief.

"I thought it might have been——" began Droom with a wry grin.

"Nonsense!"

"It is a bit too soon. They haven't had time."

As Droom left the room, Bansemer crossed to the window and looked down into the seething street far below. He saw that his hand trembled and he tried to laugh at his weakness. For a long time he stood there, his unseeing eyes focused on the hurrying masses, his ears alert for unusual sounds from the outer office.

"If it were not for Graydon," he was muttering between set teeth. "God, how I hate to have him know!"

Droom had told Eddie Deever to "get out," but Eddie was there to talk and be talked to, so he failed to take the hint.

"Say, I haven't seen you since you played the hero up in the fashionable part of town. Gee, that was a startler! I'll bet old man Cable rewards you in some way. What's your theory about the hold-up?"

Droom looked up sharply. For the first time there shot into his mind the thought that the breezy boy might be a spy.

"I haven't any," he replied shortly. He was trying to remember if he had ever said anything incriminating to the boy.

"How d' you happen to be over there just at that time?"

"I haven't time to talk about it. Please don't bother me. It happened three days ago and I've really forgotten about it. Don't throw that cigarette into the wastebasket. Haven't you any sense?"

"Gee, you don't suppose I'm going to throw it away,

do you? There's half an inch of it left. Not me. Say, I've heard your boss has quite a case on Mrs. Cable. How about it?" he almost whispered this.

"You shouldn't talk like that."

"Oh, you mean that gag about people living in glass houses? Gee, don't worry about that. Chicago is a city of glass houses. A blind man could throw rocks all day and smash a hole in somebody's house every crack. I believe the hold-up man was one of those strikers who have been out of jobs all winter. Smith thinks so."

"Who?"

"Judge Smith."

"That's better."

"Did you see his face?"

"What are you, bub—a detective?"

"Rosie Keating says I'd make a better policeman than lawyer. She's sore at me for taking Miss Throckmorton to Mam' Galli's the other night. Fellow stood on the piano and sang the derndest song I've ever heard. But, gee, I don't think Miss Throck was on. She didn't seem to notice, I mean. Say, on the dead, do you think you could identify that fellow?"

"Look here, boy, if anyone ever asks you whether I'd know that man's face if I saw it again, you just say that I'd know it in a thousand. I saw it plainly."

Eddie gulped suddenly and looked more interested than ever.

"Do you think they'll get him?"

"They will if he talks too much."

"I hope so. Say, how's that new patent coming on?"

"I'm not making a patent. I'm making a model. It's nearly completed. The strike in the shops is holding me back with it. Curse these strikes."

"Oh, they bust 'em up mighty quick. There hasn't been a big one on since Debs engineered his and Cleveland called out the troops."

"Boy, you wait a few years and you'll see a strike that will paralyse you. Look at these teamsters. They're powerful now. They'll get licked, but they'll come back. When the next big money panic comes—it'll be in my day, too—you'll see the streets of Chicago running with blood. These fellows will go after the rich, and they'll get 'em. You will live to see the day when women who wear diamonds around their throats will have harsh, horny fingers there instead. There will be rich men's blood on every paving stone and beautiful necks will be slit with less mercy than marked the French butchery years ago. That's my prophecy. Some day you'll recall it to mind, especially if you happen to become very prosperous. It's bound to come. Now get out. I have a lot of writing to do." Eddie snickered.

"What will the law be doing all this time?"

"Bosh! The law can't even capture Mrs. Cable's assailant. Do you know what the human lust for blood is? Take an enraged man, doesn't he hunger for blood? He wants to kill and he does kill. Well, he is but an atom—an individual. Now, can you imagine what it will mean when a whole class of people, men and women, are forced to one common condition—the lust for blood? The individual lusts, and so will the mass. The rage of the mass will be the same as the fury of

the individual. It will be just like one tremendous man of many parts rioting for——"

The outer door opened suddenly and an old gentleman entered.

"Is Mr. Bansemer here?" he asked, removing his silk hat nervously.

"Yes, Mr. Watts. I'll tell him you are here."

Watts, the banker, confronted Bansemer a moment later, an anxious, hunted look in his eyes. John Watts was known as one of the meanest men in the city. No one had bested him in a transaction of any kind. As hard as nails and as treacherous as a dog, he was feared alike by man and woman.

Watts, perhaps for the first time in his self-satisfied life, was ready to bow knee to a fellow-man. A certain young woman had fallen into the skilful hands of Counsellor James Bansemer, and Mr. Watts was jerked up with a firmness that staggered him.

"Mr. Bansemer, I have come in to see if this thing can't be settled between us. I don't want to go into court. My wife and daughters won't understand that it's a case of blackmail on the part of this woman. Let's come to terms."

Bansemer smiled coolly. It was impossible to resist the temptation to toy with him for a while, to humble and humiliate this man who had destroyed hundreds in his juggernaut ride to riches. Skilfully he drew the old man out. He saw the beads of perspiration on his brow and heard the whine come from his voice. Then, in the end, he sharply changed his tactics.

"See here, Watts, you've got a wrong impression of

this affair. I don't like your inferences. I am not asking you for a cent. I wouldn't take it. You have just offered me $25,000 to drop the affair. That's an insult to my integrity. I've investigated this girl's claim pretty thoroughly and I believe she is trying to fleece you. I have given up the case. None of that sort of thing for me. She'll go to some unscrupulous lawyer, no doubt, but I am out of it. I don't handle that kind of business. You have insulted me. Get out of my office, sir, and never enter it again."

"Give me that in writing," began the wily banker, but Bansemer had called to Droom. Eddie Deever was standing near the door, almost doggedly curious.

"Show Mr. Watts the door, and if he ever comes here again call the police. He has tried to bribe me."

Watts departed in a dazed sort of way and Droom closed the door.

"Are you still here?" he demanded of Eddie Deever in such a manner that the young man lost no time in leaving.

"There goes twenty-five thousand," said Bansemer, with a cold grin.

"I guess you can afford to lose it," muttered Droom. "It was slick, I suppose, but it's probably too late to help."

"Have you telephoned to Graydon?"

"Not yet."

"Don't."

"Change of heart?"

"Change of mind."

"That's so. You haven't any heart."

CHAPTER XIX

THE CRASH

Bansemer was not losing his courage; it was only the dread of having Graydon find out. He stuck close to his office, seeing but few people. However, he did saunter into Rigby's office for a friendly chat, but learned nothing from the manner of that astute young man. With a boldness that astonished himself—and he was at no time timid—he asked if Harbert intended to remain in Chicago for any length of time. After he had gone away, Rigby rubbed his forehead in a bewildered sort of way and marvelled at the nerve of the man.

The day passed slowly; but late in the afternoon the suspense became so keen that he found it difficult to keep himself from making inquiries of the proper officials as to whether affidavits had been filed by Harbert or any other person. His hand did not shake now, but there was a steady pain at the back of his head.

"Droom, I think I'll go home. If I don't appear in the morning, you'll know that I'm at some police station. Good-day!"

"Good-bye!" said Elias, with correcting emphasis. Bansemer laughed heartily.

"I believe you'd like to see me jugged."

"Not unless you could be convicted. I'll have to remain in your employ until then, I suppose."

"I've often wondered why you don't quit of your own accord—it seems so distasteful to you."

"I'm working for you from force of habit."

"You'll turn State's evidence if I'm arrested, no doubt, curse you."

"If my word counted for anything," and he raised his hand; "I'd say—'So help me—I shan't."

"I've never been able to understand you."

"I guess you've always understood my feelings towards you."

"You hate me?"

"I'm no exception to the rule."

"But hang you, you're faithful?"

"Oh, I'll pay for it, never fear. You won't hesitate to sacrifice me if it will help you in any way. But, let me tell you something. Elias Droom has been smart enough to cover every one of *his* tracks, even if he hasn't been able to cover yours. I can't perform miracles. You don't seem as keen to bring about the family explosion as you were, I observe."

"By heavens, I can't bear the thought of that boy—oh, well, close up the office as soon as you like."

After he was safely out of the office Elias Droom glided into the private office, drew forth his bunch of keys and opened his employer's desk. A big revolver lay in the top drawer. The old clerk quickly removed the five cartridges and as deftly substituted a new set of them in their stead. The new ones were minus the explosive power. He grinned as he replaced the

weapon and closed the desk. Dropping the cartridges into his coat pocket, he returned to his own desk, chuckling as he set to work on his papers.

"I won't betray him to the law, but I've fixed it so that he can't escape it in that way."

Bansemer's man informed him upon his arrival home that Mr. Graydon would not be in for dinner. He had left word that Mrs. Cable was very much improved and that he and Miss Cable were going out for a long drive—in a hansom. It was his intention to dine with Mr. and Miss Cable, very informally.

Bansemer sat in surly silence for a long time, trying to read. A fierce new jealousy was growing in his heart. It was gradually dawning upon him that the Cables had alienated his son's affections to no small degree. The fear grew upon him that Graydon ultimately would go over to them, forgetting his father in the love for the girl. Resentment, strong and savage, flooded his heart. He could eat no dinner. He was full of curses for the fate which forced him to dine alone while his son was off rejoicing with people whom he was beginning to hate with a fervour that pained him. Jealousy, envy, malice, fired his blood.

He went out and bought the evening papers. The thought came to him that Graydon had heard the stories and was deliberately staying away from him. Perhaps the Cables had been talking to him.

"By Heaven," he grated as he paused in front of his home, "if she's turned him against me I'll turn this city into anything but a paradise for her. What a

fool I've been to wait so long. I've given her the chance to tell her side of the case first. She's made the first impression. What could I have been thinking of? Droom was right. I should have demanded less of her. A man is never too old to be a fool about women. Oh, if she's turned that boy against me, I'll——"

He did not finish the threat, but started off swiftly through the night toward the Cable home. He had no especial object in view; it was simply impossible for him to conquer the impulse to be near his son. Like a thief he lurked about the street in the vicinity of Cable's house, standing in the shadows, crossing and recrossing the street many times, always watching the lighted windows with hateful eyes. It was after eight o'clock and the night was damp with the first breath of spring. There was a slight chill in the air, but he did not feel it, although he was without an overcoat.

The lights on the second floor, he knew, were in Mrs. Cable's room. In his mind's eye, he could see Graydon there with the others listening to the story as it fell from prejudiced, condemning lips—the pathetic, persuasive lips of a sick woman. He knew the effect on the chivalrous nature of his son; he could feel the coldness that took root in his boy's heart.

A light mist began to blow in his face as he paced back and forth along the short block in which the Cables lived. He was working his imagination up to a state bordering on frenzy. In his fancy he could hear Graydon cursing him in the presence of his accusers.

At the end of the street he could see the break in the sea wall where Cable and his wife had met, and he could not help wishing that Droom had not pulled her from the water. Then he found himself wondering if they had told Jane the story of her origin. The hope that she was still undeceived flashed through him; it would give him a chance for sweet revenge.

He confessed to himself that he was reckless. The transactions of the past few days had left him at the edge of the abyss; he recognised his peril, but could not see beyond his own impulses.

"I believe I'll do it," he was muttering to himself as he paused across the street from their door. "Graydon ought to hear both sides of the story."

He crossed the street with hesitating steps. His thin coat collar was buttoned close about his neck; his gloveless hands were wet and cold from the mist. As he stopped at the foot of the stone steps a man came hurrying along, glancing at the house numbers as he approached.

"Do you know whether this is David Cable's house?" he asked.

Bansemer saw that he was a young man and an eager one.

"I think it is."

The other bounded up the steps and rang the bell. When the servant opened the door Bansemer heard the new arrival ask for Cable, adding that he was from one of the newspapers, and that he must see him at once.

Bansemer stood stark and dumb at the foot of the

steps. The whole situation had rushed upon him like an avalanche. Harbert had filed his charges and the hasty visit of the reporter proved that David Cable was an instrument in them. The blood surged to his head; he staggered under the shock of increased rage.

"Graydon is against me! They've won him over! Open the door, damn you! I want my son!" He shouted the demand in the face of the startled servant as he pushed rudely past him.

"You stay here, young fellow, and you'll hear a story that will fill a whole paper. I am James Bansemer. Where is Cable? You!" to the servant.

"Sh!" cried the frightened servant, recognising him. "Mrs. Cable is resting, sir."

"What are you doing here?" Bansemer demanded of the reporter, exerting all his crafty resourcefulness in the effort to calm himself.

"Cable has been elected president of the——" began the young man just as Cable himself started down the stairway.

"Cable, where is my son?" demanded Bansemer loudly, starting toward the steps. He had not removed his hat and was, indeed, an ominous figure. Cable clutched the stair rail and glared down at him in amazement. Before he could pull himself together sufficiently to reply, Graydon Bansemer hurried past him and stared in alarm at the unexpected figure below.

"What's the matter, dad?" he cried. "What has happened?"

"Aha? You think something *could* have happened,

eh? Damn all of their souls, you shan't be taken in by them. Come down here, boy!"

"Father, are you crazy?" gasped Graydon, rushing down the stairs.

"Get him away from here, Graydon, for God's sake," exclaimed Cable. "Take him away! He's your father, but if he stays in this house a minute longer I'll kill him!"

The man from the newspaper was shrewd enough to withdraw into a less exposed spot. He saw a great "beat" in prospect.

Graydon stopped as if stunned by a blow. Bobby Rigby came running to the head of the stairs, followed by Jane and another young woman. James Bansemer could not have been expected to know it, but Rigby and Miss Clegg had come to tell these friends that they were to be married in December.

"Kill me, eh? Not if you can't do a better job than you did the other night. Here, you reporter, ask Mr. Cable to explain the mystery of that affair on the lake front. Oh, I know all about it! You've started in to ruin me, but I'll be in on it myself. We'll have a general cleaning up."

"Father! What are you talking about?" cried Graydon, aghast.

"They haven't told you about the lake front, eh? I should think not! See him cringe!"

Cable had indeed fallen back against the wall, halfway up the steps, white and trembling. His eyes were raised, and he was the first to see Mrs. Cable as she came from her room.

"Go back!" he whispered hoarsely to her. She reached the banister and leaned over, her eyes filling with terror after a swift glance at Jane.

"Take Jane away," she murmured, realising that the blow was to fall.

"I'll stop his infernal tongue!" shouted Cable, leaping down the steps, his eyes blazing. James Bansemer laughed as he braced himself for the shock. They did not come together, for Graydon threw his big frame in the path of the assailant. For an instant there was a frightful uproar. Rigby and the servant rushed to the young man's assistance. The women were screaming with terror, the men were shouting and there was a violent struggle which played havoc in the hallway.

"Call the police!" shouted Rigby.

"You infernal traitor!" hissed James Bansemer. "You claim to be Graydon's friend, and yet you are the one who has led the plot to ruin me."

"What does it all mean?" cried Graydon, holding the shaking Cable tightly.

There was a moment of intense silence, except for the heavy breathing of the men. Graydon was staring wide-eyed at his father. He saw the cruel, sardonic smile spread over his face and shuddered.

"I've simply come to take you out of the clutches of these people. I've waited to see if that scheming woman up there would tell you of her own accord. She hasn't told you; so I will. You cannot marry that girl, for your haughty Jane Cable is a child of shame, picked up on a doorstep, cast off by the woman who conceived her!"

The crash had come. The heartless accuser stood like a tragic player in the centre of his stage, pouring out his poison without a touch of pity for the stricken girl who, after the first thrill of indignation and horror, had shrunk back into her mother's arms, bewildered.

"Call the police, if you like," laughed Bansemer, at the end of his tirade. "It isn't a criminal offence to tell the truth. It will sound just as well in court, Mr. Rigby."

"Jane, Jane," Mrs Cable was murmuring, "I might have saved you all this, but I couldn't—oh, I couldn't pay the price."

"You snake!" groaned Cable, weak and hoarse with rage. "Jane, he has lied! There is not a word of truth in what he says. I swear it to you."

"Ho, ho! By Heaven, she hasn't told you, after all!" cried Bansemer. "You still think she is yours!"

"Father!" exclaimed Graydon, standing straight before the other. David Cable had dropped limply into a chair, his hand to his heart. "I won't stand by and hear you any longer. Take back what you've said about her, or, damn you, I'll forget that you are my father and——"

"Graydon!" exclaimed Bansemer, falling back, his expression changing like a flash. The smile of triumph left his face and his lip twitched. "You forget I—I am doing this for your sake. My God, boy, you don't understand. Don't turn from me to them. They have——"

"That's enough, father! Don't say another word! You've talked like a madman. See! Look what you've

done! Oh, Jane!" he caught sight of the girl on the landing and rushed up to her.

"Is it true, Graydon—is it true?" she wailed, beating her hands upon his arm.

"No! It can't be true! He's gone mad, dearest."

"Is it true, mother? Tell me, tell me!"

Frances Cable's white lips moved stiffly, but no sound came forth. Her eyes spoke the truth, however. The girl sank limp and helpless in Graydon's arms and knew no more. At the foot of the steps Rigby was pointing his trembling finger at James Bansemer.

"You'll pay for this to-morrow!" he was saying. "Your day has come! You cutthroat! You blackmailer!"

"Graydon!" called the father. "Come, let us go home. Come, boy!"

"Not now—not now," answered the son hoarsely. "I'll—I'll try to come home to-night, father. I'm not sure that I can. My place is here—with her."

Without a word James Bansemer turned and rushed out into the street, tears of rage and disappointment in his eyes. He had not expected the gall. Until the break of day he sat in his chill room waiting for the rasp of his son's night key—but Graydon did not come home.

CHAPTER XX

FATHER AND SON

Graydon sat with his chin in his hands, dull, stricken, crushed. He had heard the story of his father's baseness from Frances Cable, and he had been told the true story of Jane; from Rigby he learned of the vile transactions in which his father had dealt. At first, he could scarcely believe his own ears, but in the end he saw that but half the truth could be told.

It was past midnight when he left David Cable's, not to go to his own home, but to that of Elias Droom. He knew now that the newspapers would devote columns to the "sensation in high life"; he knew that Jane would suffer agonies untold, but he would not blame his father for that; he knew that arrest and disgrace hung over the tall grey man who had shown his true and amazing side at last; he knew that shame and humiliation were to be his own share in the division. Down somewhere in his aching heart he nourished the hope that Elias Droom could ease the pain of these wretched disclosures.

As he traversed the dark streets across town he was vaguely wondering whether Jane's eyes would ever lose the pained, hopeless expression he had last seen in them. He wondered whether she would retract her avowal that she could not be his wife with the shame

upon her; he rejoiced in her tearless, lifeless promise to hold him in no fault for what had happened.

Distressed and miserable, he spent the remainder of the night in Elias Droom's squalid rooms, sitting before the little stove which his host replenished from time to time during the weary hours.

Droom answered his questions with a direct tenderness that surprised even himself. He kept much to himself, however, and advised the young man to reserve judgment until after he had heard his father's side of the story.

"I've been loyal to James Bansemer, Graydon, and I'll still be loyal to him. He's not done right by other people, but he has tried to do right by you."

"If he wanted to do right by me, why did he not tell me of Jane's—misfortune?" exclaimed the young man bitterly.

"Because he really wanted you to marry her. She was born wrong, but anybody can see she is without a flaw. That's the truth, Graydon. Your father was wrong in his desire to make capital of it in connection with Mrs. Cable. I told him so. I don't believe he knew just what he was doing. He was so used to success, you see. Can't you go to sleep, boy? You need to."

"God, no!"

"I'd advise you to go home and talk it over with your father."

"To-morrow will be time enough. After the newspapers are out. I can't bear to think of the disgrace. Harbert has been interviewed, they say. He's told everything."

"Talk to your father to-night, my boy. There may be—may be warrants to-morrow."

The young man dropped his head on his arm and burst into tears. Old Droom puffed vigorously at his pipe, his eyes shifting and uncomfortable. Twice he attempted to speak, and could not. In both instances he arose and poked the fire. At last the young man's choking sobs grew less violent. Droom cleared his throat with raucous emphasis, took his snaky gaze from a print on the wall representing "Dawn," and spoke:

"You wouldn't think it to look at me now—or any other time, for that matter—but I loved a woman once. A long time ago. She never knew it. I didn't expect her to love me. How could I? Don't cry, Graydon. You're not like I was. The girl you love loves you. Cheer up. If I were you I'd go ahead and make her my wife. She's good enough, I'll swear."

"She says she can't marry me. Good Heaven, Elias, you don't know what a blow it was to her. It almost killed her. And my own father—oh, it was terrible!"

Elias Droom did not tell him—nor had he ever told anyone but himself—that the woman he loved was the boy's mother. He loved her before and after she married James Bansemer. He never had faltered in his love and reverence for her.

Graydon waited in his rooms until the old man returned with the morning papers. As Droom placed them on the table beside him, he grinned cheerfully.

"Big headlines, eh? But these are not a circumstance

to what they will be. These articles deal only with the great mystery concerning the birth of one of the 'most beautiful and popular young women in Chicago.' Wait —wait until the Bansemer smash comes to reinforce the story! Fine reading, eh!"

"Don't, Elias, for Heaven's sake, don't!" cried the young man. "Have you no soft spot in your heart? God, I believe you enjoy all this. Look! Look what it says about her! The whole shameful story of that scene last night! There was a reporter there when it happened."

Together they read the papers. Their comments varied. The young man writhed and groaned under the revelations that were going to the public; the old clerk chuckled and philosophised.

Every one of these papers prophesied other and more sensational developments before the day was over. It promised to be war to the knife between David Cable, president of the Pacific, Lakes & Atlantic, and the man Bansemer. In each interview with Cable he was quoted as saying emphatically that the adoption of Jane had been made with his knowledge and consent. The supposed daughter was the only one to whom the startling revelations were a surprise. There also was mention of the fact that the young woman had immediately broken her engagement with James Bansemer's son. There were pictures of the leading characters in the drama.

"I can't stay in Chicago after all this," exclaimed Graydon, springing to his feet, his hands clenched in despair. "To be pointed out and talked about! To

be pitied and scorned! To see the degradation of my own father! I'll go—anywhere, just so it is away from Chicago."

Droom forgot his desire to scoff. His sardonic smile dwindled into a ludicrously, pathetic look of dismay. He begged the young man to think twice before he did anything "foolish." "In any event," he implored, "let me get you some breakfast, or at least, a cup of coffee."

In the end he helped Graydon into his coat and glided off down Wells Street after him. It was seven o'clock, and every corner newsstand glowered back at them with black frowns as they looked at the piles of papers. Two rough-looking men walking ahead of them were discussing the sensation in a lewd, brutal way. A saloon-keeper shouted to them: "It don't always happen over on de West Side, does it?"

Graydon went to the office of Clegg, Groll & Davidson early and arranged his affairs so that they could be taken up at once by another; and then, avoiding his fellow-workers as much as possible, presented himself to Mr. Clegg at ten o'clock. Without hesitation he announced his intention to give up his place in the office. All argument put forth by his old friend and employer went for naught. The cause of his action was not discussed, but it was understood.

"If you ever want to come back to us, Graydon, we will welcome you with open arms. It isn't as bad as you think."

"You don't understand, Mr. Clegg," was all that Graydon could say.

Then he hurried off to face his father.

James Bansemer, haggard from loss of sleep and from fury over the alienation of his son, together with the fear of what the day might bring, was pacing the floor of his private office. Droom had eased his mind but little in regard to his son. When he heard Graydon's voice in the outer room, his face brightened and he took several quick steps toward the door. He checked himself suddenly with the remembrance that his son had turned against him the night before, and his face hardened.

Graydon found him standing stern and unfriendly before the steam radiator in the darkest corner of the room, his hands behind his back. The young man plumped down heavily in his father's desk chair.

"Why didn't you come home last night?" demanded the other.

"I hated the thought of it," he answered dejectedly.

"You've listened to their side of the story. You're a splendid son, you are!" sneered the father.

"There is nothing base and unprincipled in their side of the story. They have tried to shield her; they have never harmed her. But you! Why, father, you've blighted her life forever. They were going to tell her in a day or so, and they could have made it easy for her. Not like *this!* Why, in Heaven's name, did you strike her like that? She's—she's the talk of the town. She's ostracised, that's what she is, and she's the best girl that ever lived."

"Oh, you think they would have told her, eh? No! They would have let her marry——"

"Well, and what was your position? Why were you so considerate up to last night? If you knew, why did you let me go on so blindly? The truth is, father, if you must have it, you have acted like a damned scoundrel."

James Bansemer glared at his son with murder in his eyes.

"I wouldn't have believed the other things they say of you if I hadn't *this* to break down my faith. I heard *this* with my own ears. It was too contemptible to forget in a lifetime. I did not come here to discuss it with you. The thing is done. I came here to tell you that I am going to leave Chicago. You *won't* go, so I will." Bansemer still glared at him, but there was amazement mingling with rage in his eyes. "I can't look a soul in the face. I am ashamed to meet the Cables. Good Lord, I'm afraid even to think of Jane."

"I suppose you—you would marry her, like a fool, even now," muttered the father.

"Marry her? Of course I would. I love her more than ever. I'd give my life for her; I'd give my soul to ease the pain you have thrust upon her. But it's over between us. Don't let our affairs worry you. She has ended it. I don't blame her. How could she marry your son? Why, do you know that I have hoped that I might not be your son, after all? I almost prayed that my mother might have loved someone else instead of you. God, I'd like the pain of knowing that."

Bansemer leaned heavily against the radiator, gasping for breath. Then he staggered to the couch and dropped upon it, moaning.

"Graydon, Graydon! Don't say that! Don't! I'll make everything right. I'll try to undo it all! My boy, you are the only thing on earth I love. I've been heartless to all the rest of the world, but I love you. Don't turn against me."

The son stood looking at him in dull wonder. His heart was touched. He had not thought that this stern man could weep; he began to see the misery that was breaking him.

"Dad, don't do that," he said, starting toward him. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for you."

Bansemer leaped to his feet, his mood changing like a flash.

"I don't want your pity. I want your love and loyalty. I didn't mean to be weak. Will you leave Chicago with me? I must go. We'll go at once—anywhere, only together. We can escape if we start now. Come!"

"I won't go that way!" exclaimed Graydon. "Not like a criminal."

"No? You won't?" There was no answer. "Then, there's nothing more to say. Go! Leave me alone. I had prayed that you might not have been like this. Go! I have important business to attend to at once." He cast his gaze toward the drawer in which the pistol lay. "I don't expect to see you again. Take this message to the Cables. Say that I am the only living soul who knows the names of that girl's father and mother. God alone can drag them from me."

Graydon was silent, stunned, bewildered. His father was trembling before him, and he opened his lips to

utter the question that meant so much if the answer came.

"Don't ask me!" cried Bansemer. "You would be the last I'd tell. Marry her, and be dammed!"

"I don't believe you know," cried Graydon.

"Ah, you think I'll tell you?" triumphantly.

"I don't want to know." He sat down, his moody gaze upon his father. Neither spoke for many minutes. Neither had the courage. James Bansemer finally started up with a quick look at the door. Droom was speaking to someone in the outer office.

"Go now," he said harshly; "I want to be alone."

"Father, are you—are you afraid of these charges?" His father laughed shortly and extended his hand to the young man.

"Don't worry about me. They can't down James Bansemer. You may leave Chicago; I'll stay! Good-bye, Graydon!"

"Good-bye, dad!"

They shook hands without flinching and the young man left the room. On the threshold the father called after him:

"Where do you expect to go?"

"I don't know!"

Droom was talking to a youth who held a notebook in his hand and who appeared frightened and embarrassed. Graydon shook hands with the old man. Droom followed him into the hall.

"If you ever need a friend, Graydon," he said in a low voice, "call on me. If I'm not in jail, I'll help you."

Half an hour later Graydon rang the Cables' door-bell.

"Miss Jane is not seeing anyone to-day, sir," said the servant.

"Say that I must see her," protested the young man; "I'm going away to-night."

"So is she, sir."

"Where?"

"I don't know, sir. California, more than likely. Mrs. Cable and she will be gone for some time."

"Did she tell you not to admit me?" he asked, white-faced and calm.

"Yes, sir. *Nobody*, sir."

He turned down the steps and walked away.

That afternoon he enlisted, and the following morning was going westward with a party of recruits, bound eventually for service with the Regulars in the Philippines.

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE PHILIPPINES

David Cable lost no time in hurrying away from Chicago with his wife and Jane. They were whisked westward in his private car on the second day after the Bansemer exposure. Broken-spirited, Jane acquiesced in all their plans; she seemed as one in a stupor, comprehending, yet unresponsive to the pain that enveloped her.

"I can't see anyone that I know here," she said listlessly. "Oh, the thought of what they are saying!"

They did not tell her that Graydon had enlisted as a private soldier in the United States Army; Jane only knew that she loved him and that the bar sinister existed.

Cable's devotion to her was beautiful. He could not have been more tender had she been his own daughter, instead of his wife's imposition.

Jane was ill in Pasadena for many weeks. Her depressed condition made her recovery doubtful. It was plain to two persons, at least, that she did not care whether she lived or died. The physicians were puzzled, but no explanation was offered by the Cables. It was not until certain Chicago sojourners generously spread the news, that the cause of her breakdown became apparent to the good doctors. Before many days,

the girl who sat, wan and distrait, upon the flower-shaded piazza was an object of curiosity to fashionable Pasadena. As soon as she was strong enough to endure the trip, the hunted trio forsook Pasadena and fled northward.

San Francisco afforded relief in privacy. Jane's spirits began to revive. There had not been, nor was there ever to be, any mention of that terrible night and its revelations. What she may have felt and suffered in secret could only be conjectured by those who loved her. Bansemer's name was never uttered. His fate remained unknown to her. The far-away, unhappy look in her eyes proved to them that Graydon was never out of her thoughts.

David Cable was in Chicago when Mrs. Cable received word from her sister, once Kate Coleman, that she soon would reach San Francisco with her husband, bound for the Philippines. Kate was the wife of a West Pointer who had achieved the rank of colonel in the volunteers, by virtue of political necessity. His regiment had been ordered to the islands, and she was accompanying him with their daughter, a girl of sixteen.

Colonel Harbin had seen pleasant service at the Eastern posts where his wife had attained a certain kind of social distinction in the army fast set. She was not especially enamoured of the prospect ahead of her in the Philippines; but the new colonel was a strict disciplinarian on and off the field. He expected to be a brigadier-general if fortune and favouritism supported him long enough. Mrs. Harbin could never be any-

thing more than a private in the ranks, so far as his estimation of distinction was concerned. His daughter Ethel had, by means of no uncertain favouritism, advanced a few points ahead of her mother, and might have ranked as sergeant in the family corps.

Mrs. Harbin played cards, drank highballs, flirted with the younger officers, got talked about with pleasing emphasis, and was as happy as any subordinate could be. They had not even thought of such a thing as divorce, and the whole army wondered and expressed disgust. The army's appetite for scandal is surpassed only by its bravery in war. It is even hinted that the latter is welcomed as a loophole for the former. War brings peace.

The arrival of the Harbins and a staff of gay young cadets fresh from the banks of the Hudson put new life into the recluses. The regiment was to remain at the Presidio for several weeks before sailing. One of the lieutenants was a Chicago boy and an acquaintance of Graydon Bansmer. It was from him that Jane learned that her sweetheart was a soldier in the service, doubtless now in Luzon.

A week before the sailing of Colonel Harbin's transport Jane suddenly announced that she had but one desire on earth, and that was to go to Manila with her aunt. She did not present her plea with the usual claim that she wanted to be of service to her country; she was not asking to go out as a heroine of the ordinary type; instead, she simply announced that she wanted to go as a temporary member of Colonel Harbin's family, to endure their hardships and to enjoy

their enthusiasms. Mrs. Cable recognised the true motive, however.

Her pleadings were in vain. The Harbins had lucklessly urged Jane to join them. Telegrams flew back and forth across the continent and David Cable came on to present his feeble objections.

When the great transport sailed away, Jane Cable was one of her passengers, the ward of the regiment.

"It's just for a little while, dad," she said wistfully at the dock. "A few months. I'll think of you every minute I'm away."

The blood of the man in the service was calling to her. The ocean was between them; the longing to be near him, to tread the same soil, had conquered in the eternal battle of love. After all, no matter how the end was attained, she was a creature of life, brought into the world to love and to be loved. She put the past behind her and began to build a new future—a future in which the adoration of Graydon Bansemer was the foundation. The hope that makes all human averages was at the work of reconstruction; youth was the builder. The months of destruction had not left a hopeless ruin as the heritage of dead impulses.

The world grew brighter as the ship forged westward. Each day sent warmer blood into her veins and a deeper light into her eyes. The new life was not inspired by the longing to be his wife, but to see him again and to comfort him. She would be no man's wife.

At last, one hot, soft morning in early July, the great transport slipped past Corregidor and turned

its nose across Manila bay, past Cavite, toward the anchorage which ended the long voyage. The city of Manila lay stretched out before them—Manila, the new American capital.

The troops were marched off to quarters and the Harbins, with Jane Cable, repaired at once to the Oriente, where they were to live prior to taking a house in Ermita or San Miguel. The campaign was not being pushed vigorously at this time; it was the rainy season. Desultory fighting was going on between the troops and the insurgents; there were numerous scouting and exploring expeditions into the enemy's country. The famous round robin of the correspondents had been sent to the United States by this time, taking severely to task the army censorship which prevented the real condition of affairs from reaching the deluded public. The situation was much worse on the island of Luzon than anyone at home could have imagined. But little truth escaped the vigilant wisdom of the arbitrarians. It was not until later on, however, that the effects of the round robin were felt in headquarters at Manila; when that time came the Ayuntamiento in the walled city was not a pleasant retreat for the newspaper men who had dared.

A week elapsed before Jane could find the opportunity to make inquiries concerning the whereabouts of Graydon Bansemer. Her thoughts had been of nothing else; her eagerness had been tempered by the diffidence of the over-zealous. She and pretty Ethel Harbin had made life endurable for the gay young officers who came over on the ship; the pretty wives of

certain captains and lieutenants had small scope for their blandishments at close range. Flirtations were hard to manage in space so small. The two girls were therefore in a state of siege most of the time. The abject following fell away perceptibly when the broader field of action on shore gave their married sisters a chance to manœuvre with some degree of security. A faithful few remained in train, however. Ethel Harbin, like the ingenue in the play, had each finger clumsily but tightly wrapped with a breathing uniform of blue. It must be admitted in shame, however, that she changed the bandages often and without conscience or ceremony.

Jane's admirers were in love with her. She was not the sort to inspire idle fancies—either in married or unmarried men. In any event, it looked a long time to these chaps before they could get back to the States, and she was worth while.

Perhaps her most devoted admirer was Lieutenant Bray. Good-looking and coming from an excellent Southern family, he was a great favourite with all. Jane liked him better than any of the rest; she would have liked him still better had he been able to resist a tendency to boast of the stock from which he had sprung. The knowledge of her disadvantages in life, the contrast between their respective positions, all tended to emphasise the irony of fate; and she often found herself wondering how this sprig of true aristocracy would conduct himself if he discovered that, after all, she was only a *foundling*.

It was Lieutenant Bray who made inquiries at general

headquarters and found, after considerable trouble, that Graydon Bansemer's company was in the north, subject to the requirements of Young, chief of scouts.

Irksome were the lazy summer months for Jane. She tired of the attentions of men; she sickened with longing and anxiety. Day after day she prayed that the troops in the north might be relieved; she watched for the order that would call for their return from the wet lands above. Sickness was prevalent among the fighting corps; the wet season had undermined the health of many. Constant news came down to Manila of the minor engagements, and she looked at every report for news of Graydon. Colonel Harbin, occasionally, had private advices from the north. She heard of Graydon's bravery more than once and glowed with pride. Down in her tired, anxious heart she was wondering if it were possible for her to go to the front in any capacity.

At last, with October, came the waning of the rainy season. November brought active fighting. A general movement of the troops was directed against Aguinaldo. In his prime, as a leader, he controlled the north, and his capture was imperative. Lawton and Young began operations on the right; McArthur on the centre; with Wheaton pushing forward on the extreme left. The insurgents fell back from Tarlac. There were many big fights at San Jacinto and other places now famous in history.

The Red Cross society held forth at Malolos, reaching gradually into the country north. Sick and wounded men came into the hospitals daily and in larger

numbers than one would have supposed. The villages or barrios all along the line of advance saw their convents turned into hospitals; as fast as possible the nurses were hurried up to them. Men and women in this noble service did heroic, faithful work both for the white and the brown men who went down. From the field hospitals the men were taken to the convents and treated until they were able to be moved to Manila.

Further north fled Aguinaldo and the Filipinos. Wheaton was ordered to cut off his retreat; Young was killed; Cunningham took charge of the scouts who scoured the country. Parties of ten or fifteen picked men fell out in advance of the main body, seeking to develop the enemy and his defences. These brave fellows attracted the hidden fire of ambush, exposed themselves to all the treacheries of warfare, and afterwards were mustered out with a kind word from the department. They were the men who tested the territory. It was with one of these scouting parties that Graydon Bansemer ventured far into the enemy's country early in November.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHASE OF PILAR

Gregorio del Pilar, the picturesque Filipino leader, about whom so much has been written in praise, by the war correspondents, was leading his men back into the dangerfields, inviting the American pursuers into every trap which his crafty brain could devise. History tells of Pilar's call to arms. He was attending a great ball in Dagupan, given in honour of his approaching nuptials. In the midst of the festivities a messenger dashed in with the news that the American troops were closing in on Tarlac, the insurgents' seat of government. Pilar rushed from the ballroom and made his way to the head of his command. His parting from the bride-to-be is pathetically described by many of the writers who were in the islands at the time. There was no more daring, romantic character in all the Philippines than young Pilar. Educated, refined, clever and attractive, he was a favourite with all, admired by friend and foe alike.

Captain Groce, with a company of infantry, was following him closely and doggedly into the fastnesses far to the north. Village after village was devastated by the white troops, always a few hours after the wily Pilar had evacuated. Amigos laughed in their deceptive sleeves at the Americans and misdirected them with impunity. In eight cases out of ten the amigo wore

arms underneath his garment of friendship and slew in the dark whenever opportunity arose. Graydon Bansemer was one of this doughty, eager company which blazed the way into the hills. Close behind came the bigger and stronger forces, with guns and horse, and the hospital corps. It was the hunt of death for Aguinaldo and Pilar.

Shortly after daybreak, one morning, a slim, black figure crept out from among the trees and gave the countersign to the challenging sentry. He was soon on his way to the Captain's headquarters bearing news of importance. The brown-skinned scout had travelled all night over a hazardous route, and he was more than welcome. He brought news that Pilar's men were off to the east and the north, well intrenched and prepared to fall upon the Americans when they advanced blindly into the trap laid for them. The newspaper men pricked up their ears, and at once looked to a box of carrier pigeons which formed a most important part of their pilgrimage. A fight was at hand, doubtless an important meeting of the clashing forces. The whole army was waiting for intelligence of Pilar—waiting with little less anxiety than that which attached itself to the pursuit of Aguinaldo.

Captain Groce ordered Sergeant Connell with a picked squad to reconnoitre. They scurried off in advance of the company with instructions to locate the elusive enemy, and open up the secret of his position. Supposedly, Pilar was ten miles off among the rocky foothills which guarded the pass through the mountains. As usual, Bansemer was one of the scouts. He snatched

his rations with the others and went forth eagerly to court the danger and the excitement that was promised. For days they had had no fighting worthy the name. Amigos everywhere, villages peopled only by women and children, treacherous peacefulness on every side; this had been their encounter: an occasional rifle shot from the rice fields, a crackle of guns far ahead, a prisoner or two who had not been quick enough in transforming himself from combatant to friend, that was all. Now, there seemed to be real fighting ahead.

Pilar was known to have many men—good soldiers all of them. The native scout gave close and accurate directions as to his position; it remained for Connell's men to draw him out, if possible. Captain Groce and the remainder of his eager company did not march until long after the scouts were on their precarious way.

Two hours after the party of eleven left the village, a Mauser bullet from the clump of trees far to the right cut through the hat of one of the scouts who was some distance in advance of his fellows. As he saw the scout stoop to pick up his hat, Rogers turned to the man nearest him and remarked:

"They'll get him sure as shootin' some day if he hikes along in that damn fool way."

It was no new experience for the scouts to find the quarry gone when they reached the place where they expected to find him. Pilar's own scouts had found that the ambuscade was destined to fail of its purpose, and the wily leader drew back into the more accessible country. The scouting party did not come in sight of the little brown soldiers. The occasional crack of

a Mauser broke the silence of the advance, keeping the Americans in active touch with the dangers that surrounded them.

They found the deserted trenches and signs of recent occupation. The insurgents had been gone from the position less than two hours. Treachery faced the little squad of Americans on every side, but they did not falter. Connell scattered his men and they stole carefully into the fastnesses, finding on all sides evidences of hasty departure. Before noon they were far up in the hills, everywhere met by the physical assurance that the enemy was not far ahead of them. Behind them came Captain Groce and his men and the two correspondents.

Amigos along the mountain road gave information that was not worth having. A deserted village showed signs of the passage and finally there was proof ahead that Pilar had stopped to give battle. He had reached his vantage ground. Connell and his men drew back and waited. Nightfall came and with it the spiteful crack of the Mauser rifle. A brawny trooper toppled over with a great hole in his head. Pilar's pickets could see like cats in the night. The native scout reported that the big village of Concepcion was not far ahead; Pilar's men were making their stand before this rather important stronghold.

"We'll get a scrap that is a scrap, boys," said Connell, exultingly. "These fellows are going to put up a fight, at last. They're like bees up yonder. We've got to fall back on the company; if we don't, they'll chew us up before the little captain can get to us."

Too well did the men know the bellicose temperament of the big Irishman to think of grumbling at such a command; yet, it was with a certain reluctance which invariably accompanies a backward step that the men retired to meet the advancing company.

Young Bansemer in his khaki uniform was not the immaculate, débonnaire man of the drawing-room. Service, though short, had been hard and gruelling. His face was even handsomer with its rugged lines and set features. He was thinner and browner; his eyes were clearer and a darker grey; his hair seemed thicker and fairer than before; his figure more erect and sinewy. The wistful look in his eyes seemed to betray hunger for action; his ever-ready eagerness to be on the move told of his strength and of his weakness. He had the lean, active bearing of the panther and the restless daring of that lithe animal.

No man in the company had stood fire as valiantly as he. He courted the whiz of the bullet, scoffed at the rigours of the march, and instinctively was a good shot with the rifle. He bore no grudge against the department at home; he had no grievance.

The officers recognised in him a man of parts, a man of station far above the position which he had chosen in the army. He was a source of mystery to the men of his own rank in the line—the ploughboys, the teamsters, the roustabouts, and the ne'erdowells who had gone into the army from choice or discretion. At first they had called him the "dude," and had laughed at his white hands and clean jaws. His indifference to their taunts annoyed them. One day he knocked

down the biggest bully of the lot and walked away without even waiting to see whether he could arise after the blow. He simply glared at the next man who chaffed. It was enough. The company held him in a new respect that forbade the reporting of the incident to the officer of the day.

Every night before he lay down to sleep, in the rice field or the barrios, he took from his pocket a leather case and gazed at the small portrait it sheltered. No one had been permitted to see him in his devotions, for that was what he called these sacred moments. His lean face, full of fierce energy all day long, softened as his eyes devoured the dainty miniature.

On meeting their company, Connell reported the situation ahead, to his superior officer; orders were given for the men to bivouac for the night in a small village close at hand. That evening Bansemer was discovered leaning against the corner of a nipa shack some distance from his comrades, smoking silently while they talked and made merry behind him. He seldom joined in the ribald but suppressed conversations of the men.

"Have you fellows ever noticed that he don't get any letters from the States—never seems to expect any?" asked Johnny Rogers, the one-time foundry man, who sat watching him. Graydon had not been the subject of conversation, but all knew whom Johnny meant by "he."

"I've noticed that, too," said Joe Adams.

"I got him sized up all right," said one of the Spurrier boys. "His people don't know where he's at. That feller's a swell at home an' he's had to skip out. I'll

bet my breakfast his name ain't Bansemer. An' if his people don't know where he's at, how in thunder can they write to him? See what I mean?"

"Think he's a bank cashier?" asked Sim Relander.

"Naw; it ain't money, it's some girl. I know these swell guys," said Rogers. "You're right about his people not knowin' where to write. He's a mystery, that feller is. I'll tell what I think: his folks have fired him out—won't recognise him. See? Disgraced 'em, an' all that. That's why he ain't expectin' nothin' from home. He knows he won't get it."

"I feel kind o' sorry for a feller like that," mused Tom Reagan. "I had a brother that had to skip once."

"That so? Did he ever come back?"

"I s'd say not. He ducked for good. Mother had a letter from him couple o' months before I left home. He was in Milwaukee."

"Aw, this Bansemer's not that sort. He's made o' different stuff. Milwaukee? Holy Moses, it's only eighty mile from Chicago!"

"Gee, I'd like to have a glass o' the goods that made Milwaukee famous," sighed Joe Adams.

"I'd like a keg," said Jim Spurrier, with a wistful look in his eyes.

"S'pose we'll ever see a glass o' beer again?" asked the other Spurrier, solemnly.

"I'll bet Bansemer's wonderin' if he'll ever taste champagne again."

"Ask him, Johnny."

"Hey, Bansemer. I've got a riddle for you. What

'u'd you sooner have right now than a bottle of champagne?"

Graydon turned and sauntered slowly over to the group. He paused for a moment in passing, a broad smile on his face.

"A pail of beer," said he.

"Good fer you!" shouted two or three vociferously. He strode off to make ready for bed.

"He's all right," exclaimed Sim Relander feelingly, as if that laconic reply had been the only thing necessary to establish the young man's social standing.

"That feller's been out here only four months, an' I'll bet they ain't any ten men in the Philippines what's had as many clost calls as he's had," said Johnny Rogers. "I was thinkin' about it to-day. He's had more narrow escapes in tight places than——"

"Well, the darned fool rushes right into 'em, don't he? He ain't got no sense. Nobody ought to git out where he can be shot at when there ain't no need. Take that blamed fool trick o' his'n there at Tarlac. When he went back all alone after the papers that Cap Groce dropped. I'll bet he was shot at two hundred times."

"Well, he didn't get hit, did he? If he gets hit good 'n' proper once he won't be so keen about showin' off," growled one of the men.

"Depends on where he's hit. Then, there was that time when he clumb the hill back yonder and turned the fire o' the gugus so's we could get up into the pass. He makes me think o' Lawton. There's the boy for me. If we had a few more generals like Lawton we'd put a crimp in these niggers so quick it would look like

a spasm." Having delivered himself of this safe prophecy, Mr. Rogers glared about him for opposition. None forthcoming, he proceeded, with a satisfied snort, to refill his pipe.

"Lawton's makin' history, and don't you forget it," observed Luke Hardy.

"He's from Indiana," piped up a homesick ploughboy from the Hoosier State.

"Then, it'll be a historical novel," said the gaunt young recruit from Grand Rapids. He was a cynic who had tried newspaper work, and who still maintained that the generals did not have as much intelligence as the privates.

"I'll never forget Bansemer when he first enlisted," reflected Joe Adams. "He wanted to go out for a cold plunge and a morning stroll, and then asked the sergeant where he could get a good riding horse. He's not so keen about strolls these days."

"He don't turn up his nose at things like he used to, either."

"I don't see why the devil he keeps so clean," grumbled Adams. "I can't."

"I'll bet one thing," mused Rogers. "He'll be a captain or something before this scrap is over."

"He'll be a corpse, that's what he'll be."

"It's my opinion he'd just as lief be shot as not," said Relander. "The only trouble is that these measly niggers can't hit anything they shoot at. If the darned fools would only try to miss him, they'd get him sure. The devil and Tom Walker—what's that?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIGHT IN THE CONVENT

"HALT! Who goes there!"

A shot rang out in the stillness of the night; it was answered at once by another closer in. More shots followed, gradually increasing to a fusillade as the scouts and pickets came running back. Men sprang up from the ground, but even as they did so another volley reached them, and three men dropped with a groan and lay still. The alarm sounded clear from the bugle and echoed back from the surrounding hills. A sharp command came from the throat of the sergeant; the company seized the stacked rifles. Captain Groce gave another order; the formation to repel attack was made in an incredibly short space of time. There was no disorder; no confusion. The little officer was as cool as if on dress parade.

"Steady, men! Wait until they're nearer!"

They had not long to wait. From all sides a horde of shouting, firing men were rushing on the little square.

"Steady, men!" was still his only command.

Then, when it seemed almost a physical impossibility to restrain their itching fingers from pulling the triggers, the longed for word was given.

"Here they are! Now, then, boys, fire!"

Volley after volley rang out. The foremost of the

enemy fell at their feet. Hand to hand was the fighting; the bayonets lunged with deadly effect, but seemed powerless to thrust the mass back on itself. Men shot, hacked, stabbed and clubbed each other. It was a whirl of uplifting and descending rifles and bolos.

Fierce oaths vied with the shrieks of the wounded for supremacy. The grunt of men who slaughter; the gasps of the victims when the steel went home were heard on all sides. At times the soldiers could not see on account of the sweat and blood pouring from their faces; the very air was foul from the steam from the living and the dead. They could not breathe; a sort of vertigo overpowered them, and they only kept their feet by grappling with the enemy.

To Bansemer, it seemed that all his life he had been doing nothing but warding off and delivering blows. Fighting side by side with Rogers, he saw, with horror, that the soldier's rifle had been torn from his hands, and that he had no weapon to defend himself; but before he could see just how it happened, this individual combat had altered its aspect: Rogers had grabbed a Filipino's gun and was doing the clubbing. With renewed zest Bansemer finished with the bayonet his own assailant, and saw the man fall on top of poor Adams and Relander.

Suddenly there was an exultant yell from the enemy. Instinctively Bansemer knew that one side of the square had given way. Quickly turning, he rushed to give his aid, and just in time caught the arm of a native about to slash him with a huge knife. With the two gripped hands high in the air struggling for mastery, the ad-

versaries became separated a bit from the rest of the chaotic mass of friend and foe, swaying out to one side of the plaza, and under the walls of a convent. Bansemer was facing it; and just at the moment that he felt his strength giving way and could see a grin of triumph on the fiendish face, there came a flash and a report, and his adversary fell at his feet. Glancing up to ascertain who had fired the shot that had saved his life, he thought he saw a figure disappearing from one of the windows. The incident acted as an inspiration. Gathering together a few men, he reached the Captain's side and communicated his plan. The opportunity was not to be lost. Groce gave an order; Connell repeated it. Then interpreting a temporary lull in the murderous struggle as their vantage, the men with a cheer, and dragging the field piece, broke for thebuilding; and by bayoneting and clubbing the insurgents out of the way accomplished the dash with slight loss. The soldiers hurled themselves against the stoutly barred door; it fell with a crash.

Guards were stationed and all openings and windows manned. Singularly enough, these defensive actions seemed at least, temporarily unnecessary, for the watchers peering out of the windows reported that the dead alone occupied the recent field of battle. Not a single Filipino was to be seen on the plaza.

Every village has its convent or barrios. Generally speaking, their size corresponds in a certain ratio with the population. But this particular building was an exception. Dimly lighted, it gave the impression of ranking in size with many of those in far larger villages.

Immediately the thought came to the invaders that the church might have sheltered the insurgent leaders. Aguinaldo or Pilar might have directed the attack from inside these walls. Orders were given to search every corner and crevice to ferret out concealed foes. A rear window was open, proving that flight could have been by that means of egress. Bansemer was almost positive that the bullet which had killed his assailant had come from one of the upper windows, but whether from friend or foe, was undeterminable. Was it possible that he had been mistaken? Had his eyes been so blinded with the smoke of battle that they had played him false? Were they not in a cunningly planned trap of some kind?

Considerably perplexed, Bansemer decided to keep on his guard. He was ruthlessly searching the chancel when a deep groan caught his attention. Presently, as he paused to listen, a dark figure leaped towards him from a recess back of the altar. The flash of a pistol blinded him, and momentarily, a sharp pain shot through his arm; but he recovered in time to throw his tall frame forward upon the slight, almost indistinguishable figure. There was a short struggle, and before his comrades could reach him his adversary was safely pinned to the floor. A moment later the torches in the hands of his friends were burning brightly above the figure of his captive—a slender boy who choked with terror and rage.

"Who the devil are you, my young friend?" asked Bansemer, holding the boy at arm's length.

There was no answer from the tightly closed lips; and

Bansemer shook him a little roughly. Then, for the first time, he perceived that he was not a Filipino. His skin was dark, but not the skin of the native; the handsome, boyish face had regular features, European in character.

"Spaniard?" inquired Bansemer, a trifle more gently; and again the boy flashed a look of hatred into his captor's eyes.

"Look here, my young spalpeen," said Connell, gruffly; "Filipino or Spaniard, if you want to save your hide, you'd better answer questions—and no lies, do you hear?"

At this threat, a deep groan was heard to come from somewhere back in the recesses of the chancel. The men were startled. Involuntarily, the boy cast a furtive glance in that direction. Connell noticed it, and leaving the boy with Bansemer, hurried away and soon was looking down into the face of a prostrate man, young, but aged with emaciation.

"You must not touch him! Don't you see that he is dying?" cried the boy piteously in broken English. "He cannot fight you—he's dying;" and then, in a perfect frenzy of rage to Bansemer: "Let me go—pig!"

Not until afterwards did Bansemer recall that in the general excitement it was the boy who dragged him along to the spot. And in spite of the solemnity of the scene, there was something in his manner of delivering the insult that amused rather than angered the American.

"Plucky little devil!" he said, half-aloud.

Again the sick man groaned, tried to rise from the blankets and speak, but only to fall back moaning. Connell cautioned him against exertion and promised that no harm should come to either of them. While he reported the discovery to Captain Groce, he had the man carried to another part of the church and there made comfortable. For the first time now, Bansemer began to notice the pain in his arm. Somewhat angrily, he turned to the boy:

"Come! Give an account of yourself! How came you here?"

"Prisoners," was the sullen answer.

"Of the Filipinos?" Bansemer asked, in surprise.

"Yes."

"Then why did you try to kill me?"

"I hate you both! We Spaniards, have we not as much to fear from you? What difference does colour make in brutes?"

"By the holy apostles! you're a gritty, young 'un!" growled the returning sergeant. "Who's the other chap?"

"My brother—he's dying," said the boy, his voice softening. "Holy Virgin, save him! For weeks we've been in the hands of Aguinaldo's men. He's been so ill, all the time; have you a doctor?"

"A surgeon will probably be with us before long," was the sergeant's evasive reply.

Bansemer looked searchingly at Connell. What he saw in the other's eyes caused him a sharp pang of grief. Both men turned their faces away for a moment, and it was with a gulp that Connell continued:

"Your brother will have the best of care if we get out of this mess. You are both safe. We are not fighting the Spaniards;" and then, pertinently: "So these were Aguinaldo's men?"

"Yes, he was here directing the fight," the boy answered.

"Aguinaldo here!" This and other ejaculations of surprise and anger burst in chorus from every throat; but as suddenly they were followed by expressions of chagrin. For, by contrasting the present situation with that which they had anticipated, this information had succeeded in intensifying their mortification.

But notwithstanding his share of the universal disappointment, a hasty reflection of preceding events convinced Graydon that personally he had little ground for complaint against the late occupants of the convent. For unintentional as undoubtedly had been the act through which at the very point of death his existence had been preserved, there was no evidence to refute the hypothesis that the shot which had killed his assailant in the plaza had been fired by one of the insurgents under cover.

"Great Scott!" was the exclamation to which he gave utterance. "Once more, I suppose, I owe my life to the blundering marksmanship of a Filipino!"

This half-hearted acknowledgment of his strange indebtedness educed from his companions no recognition other than a puzzled stare from the sergeant and an enigmatical smile on the face of the young Spaniard. Connell proceeded with his examination:

"Why did they leave you here?"

"They had no time to take us with them when you broke in," was the boy's answer. "Aguinaldo was on his way to some village where his family is in hiding. The scouts told him of your presence; then he determined not to wait for Pilar, but to surprise you. We never rested day or night. My poor brother—how he suffered!"

"Yes, yes, but why are they carrying you on a march like this?"

"My brother is the only man who knows where the Spanish gold was hidden when our war was ended—I mean, the gold that came up with guns and ammunition. Aguinaldo is looking for the hiding place. My father, a high officer in the Spanish Army, died of the fever last winter. We were stolen from our house in Manila by Aguinaldo's men, and have been going from place to place ever since. We have not told of the hiding place. The Americans do not need gold, no?" The boy laughed sarcastically.

"How many men has Aguinaldo?"

"Three hundred or more. I would advise you to look out for Pilar. He, too, may come at any moment."

Scarcely had the words left his mouth when a storm of yells came from outside the convent; and immediately the boy rushed to his brother's side.

"Great Cæsar, there's a thousand of them!" cried Rogers.

Instantly every man made for the position assigned to him. The gun was in readiness. Outside, the Mausers rattled, bullets coming from all quarters and

thumping sharply against the opposite walls with a patter that warned the Americans against standing erect.

Occasionally, a scout would peep from a window and take a shot into the darkness, but these ventures were few. All lights were extinguished; the men fired at the spots from which burst the flames of rifles, then dropped suddenly. After a while the firing of the Filipinos dwindled into a shot now and them.

"Keep low! They don't dare risk a charge! Be ready to defend the door!" Captain Groce commanded.

The night wore on, and, with the cessation of hostilities, confidence increased. Reinforcements were not far off, and it did not seem possible that the sounds of battle could not be heard. The men, worn out by the exciting events of the day, were generally silent; Sergeant Connell, however, was an exception.

"Get us! Not a bit of it!" he was saying. "The dirty, little cowards! Major March will be here in the shake of a dead lamb's tail."

An hour later Bansemer, his rifle in hand, sitting near one of the windows, suddenly felt someone tugging at his arm. Turning, he saw the Spanish boy.

"Won't you come and help me to carry my brother behind the stone altar wall?" he was saying. "He is exposed to the bullets and cannot move himself."

"Willingly!" and Graydon followed his lead. As if he was a child, he picked up the gaunt Spaniard and carefully bore him to the place of shelter. But despite all that he could do to hide his suffering, the pain in his arm, which the removal of the man had increased,

was such, for a moment, that he felt faint and staggered. The boy was quick to notice it, and quickly asked:

"What is the matter? Wounded?"

"It's nothing—merely a scratch."

"Oh, I know—why, it's your arm—and I——" The boy's face crimsoned with shame and contrition. Through the semi-darkness the blush escaped Graydon's notice, but not so the truly feminine, little shriek of dismay, as he touched and felt the wet sleeve.

"It was I who did it! Oh, how can you ever forgive me?"

Graydon, dumbfounded, stared in wonder.

"What?" he exclaimed; "you're a girl?"

"Yes—I'm his sister," pointing to the dying man; then, with some embarrassment: "These clothes? They are the only ones they would give me. You see a girl would have been a burden; a boy none at all. Do you think that had I been a man you could so easily have overpowered me? No!"

The slim, little figure drew itself up straight and defiant before him. Despite the loose, ugly garments of the Filipinos, Graydon noticed, for the first time, that the figure was perfectly moulded and high-bred. She swept off the wide hat she wore, and the man saw a mass of dark hair done up tightly on her head. But even while he gazed her mood changed; she became subserviently anxious and begged him to let her attend to his arm. She pleaded so hard that, to please her, he yielded. Water was obtained from somewhere; the slight flesh wound washed; and then, disappearing into

the darkness, to his amazement she returned almost instantly with some bandages and dressed his arm.

While this surgical operation was going on, Graydon, for the life of him, could not resist the temptation to ask her again why she had tried to shoot him. At first, so terribly in earnest did she take the question and beg for mercy, that he smiled at her; and then, seeing his amusement, she said, coquettishly:

"How could I possibly have known that you were so nice? Besides, I had always heard you Americans referred to as brutes."

Graydon laughed, then suddenly his face became very grave. The realisation of her terrible situation had dawned upon him. A woman among a crowd of rough soldiers! Her brother and protector dying! And all surrounded by hordes of savage enemies who at any moment might kill them! The thought dismissed all pleasantry from his mind. Something must be done, and at once. Presently, he asked:

"What is your name?"

"My father was Colonel Ramos Jose Velasquez; that also is my brother's name, except that he is not an officer. I am Teresa Fortune Velasquez. My mother was English—a sister of Sir William Fortune. She is dead. For ten years we have lived in Manila."

"You won't mind if I call the sergeant, will you?" The girl nodded a slightly bewildered assent as Graydon moved rapidly towards the others. Shortly, he returned with the gallant Irishman.

"Senorita," began Connell, mopping his forehead and assuming his most polite manner; "you are perfectly

safe with us, and as quickly as possible your brother and yourself shall be sent back to Manila. You are a brave slip of a girl, and we boys respect bravery in whatever dress—boy or girl."

She looked at him in grateful surprise and her lips trembled.

"But I am not your friend?"

"Possibly, señorita;" he bowed low with almost Chesterfieldian grace; "but *we* are your friends."

Outside, once more the Mausers were rattling, and Connell, with a word of parting hastily took his leave. Graydon, on the point of returning to his post, was prevented by the girl.

"You were gentle with me even when I tried to—— Don't risk your life there. Shoot from that narrow gate," pointing aloft; "it's not so exposed."

Bansemer dragged an altar chair up to the grated window and perched himself upon it. The girl sat below him, holding her brother's head in her lap. He was groaning and crying out to the soldiers to kill him rather than permit him to fall into the hands of the natives again.

Suddenly there was a great commotion, and crashing of timbers in the front part of the church, followed by shouts and the rushing of feet. Graydon dropped from his perch and ran forth into the chancel. As he did so the banging of rifles close at hand deafened him. In an instant he saw what had happened. The Filipinos had charged the door and had forced it. They were crowding their way into the church in the face of the deadly Krag-Jorgensens. The chapel was lighted,

but not from the inside. Cunning insurgents, in the shelter of the walls, were holding great torches just outside of the windows. Graydon could see his comrades firing at the door from behind every conceivable barrier. Without hesitation he dashed down the aisle and into the thick of the fray near the door.

The struggle was brief but fierce. The merciless fire of many Mausers on the outside opened a way through the small band of defenders, and the rush of the besiegers was successful. Through the door and windows they came, swarming like bees. Many of them fell to rise no more, but their comrades took an eye for an eye. Once confident soldiers toppled over dead until but few were left. Bansemer led them in a quick dash for the chancel, hoping that the enemy would not dare attack a place so sacred.

Captain Groce and other officers had fallen; Connell became the leader of the remnant. Bansemer stood squarely in front of the altar and blazed away at the horde of Filipinos as they advanced. They shot at him wildly and without effect; bullets crashed into the altar decorations behind him. He stood there as one protected by God, unharmed in the shelter of the cross.

Behind him his comrades cowered and cursed in their dread of certain death. He heard the shrill cries of the girl urging him to protect her brother. She was calling upon God and the Holy Virgin to aid and shield him. And he stood there with a crazy joy in his heart, savagely pulling the trigger of the Krag-Jorgensen. Finally the hammer snapped with no report. As he

turned back in consternation, a small figure leaped to his side with a fresh weapon.

He shouted a word of warning to her and wheeled again to confront the foe. Even as he raised the gun a great shout arose above the noise of conflict. There was a mighty rush, a new banging of guns, a sudden stampede and—the chapel was filled with men in khaki!

CHAPTER XXIV

TERESA VELASQUEZ

Great was the disappointment of Major March and his men when they found that neither Aguinaldo nor Pilar had fallen into their hands. Although they had come just in time to prevent the complete annihilation of the little company, the leaders had escaped with the remnant of their surprised forces. Scores of Filipinos were captured, dozens were killed and wounded. Eight of the dashing scouts who went out with Jerry Connell gave up their lives in exchange for the final victory.

A small guard was left at the convent to care for the wounded, the bulk of the command hurrying off at dawn to search for the routed Filipinos. Graydon Bansemer was put in charge of the convent guard. A surgeon and the application of "first aid to the injured" principles soon transformed the convent into a well arranged hospital. Uncle Sam's benevolence was also cheerfully extended to the wounded Filipinos. The days of the "water cure" and "ungodly butchery" had not yet come.

Young Velasquez died soon after daybreak. He had been dying for days. His sister's grief was pathetic in the extreme—aye, demoralising, for it struck deep into the hearts of soldiers who had scoffed at the life-blood of man, but could not brave the tears of a woman.

Bansemer did all in his power to comfort and console her. It was to him that she clung in her despair. He had been her captor; and yet it had been he who stood forth in his might to defend her and the loved one who was dead. At nightfall the dead were buried in that far-off wilderness, their humble graves marked and recorded before the time when the government could come to give other graves in other lands to these who had given their lives. Velasquez was laid beside the Americans. Teresa, a shivering, sobbing little figure in the garb of an insurgent soldier, was supported by big Graydon Bansemer. There was no service except the short army ritual; there was no priest or pastor; there was but one real mourner—a pretty, heart-broken girl who lay for hours beside the rude mound on the hillside.

Word came back at nightfall that the detachments were to form a junction at one of the big villages westward in two days. The instructions were that the wounded Filipinos should be left in the village, where native women and doctors would care for them.

"What in thunder are we to do with the girl?" was the question that came from the officer in command. More than one man scratched his head thoughtfully and looked toward the disturbing element that had come into the army. She was sitting alone and disconsolate in front of the church.

"There's no way to send her back to her friends, and we can't leave her here," said Bansemer.

"But, gee whiz, we can't take her on a hike like this," protested the sergeant. "She'll be in the way, and

she'll give out, and all that. Besides, what would we do with a woman around all the time? "

"I fancy she can hike all right," said Graydon. "Major March wouldn't expect us to leave her behind. That would be heartless."

By the time the party and guides was ready to start on its forced march, the opinion, unanimously expressed was that Teresa Velasquez should go forward also, come what might. She had pleaded so hard and so effectually that the men were fairly swept off their feet in a storm of sympathy.

"If she gives out we'll carry her," roared a deeply impressed young man with long red whiskers.

"And when we get up to the command we'll make them derned correspondents take turn about walkin', so she can ride a pony all the time. They've got no business ridin', anyhow."

And so with rosy confidence in the fitness of things and a just belief in the charity of Major March, the detachment marched out into the hills, the ward of the company trudging bravely beside the tall and envied Mr. Bansemer—who, by the way, aside from being politely attentive, did not exhibit any undue signs of exaltation.

The presence of a woman—and a very pretty one at that, with a sadness in her eyes that was appealing—served only to send his thoughts bounding back to the girl he had left behind. He grew more and more morose and silent as the day wore on; at times the tired, lonely girl at his side lagged and cast wondering, piteous glances at him. Her woman's intuition told her that

this man did not belong where he was; it told her also that he had a secret and that one of her sex was deeply involved.

The events of the next two weeks are of small consequence in this narrative, which deals not so much with the history and mystery of the campaign in the fall of '99 as with the welfare and emotions of a single soldier at the front. Aguinaldo and Pilar had become refugees by this time, hunted and hounded from place to place with relentless fervour. Pilar was somewhere in the hills with his men, the pride of the insurgent forces; Aguinaldo's remnant had scurried off in another direction, and General Tono was on the coast with what was left of the scattered force.

The net about Gregorio del Pilar was being drawn in and tightened. The closing week in November saw him driven to the last extremity. The tragedy of Tilad Pass was near at hand.

Teresa Velasquez never faltered, never tired. She proved herself to be no incumbrance. Day after day, the officer in command expected the expedition which would take her back to Manila; forces came up from the south, but none were ready to go back.

She was an inspiration to the camp. Men who had forgotten their manners completely brushed them up and danced attendance upon the girl in the Filipino uniform.

Every man prayed for opportunity to do brave deeds, and when chance came she was permitted to witness heroism that savoured of the boyhood malady known as "showing off."

The reserved, but considerate Bansemer was her closest friend and confidant. One evening, as they sat side by side watching the preparations for supper, she turned suddenly and announced that she knew he was dying of love for someone. He started and his hand trembled.

"Tell me about her," she commanded. There was a piquancy, a gay impelling force in this girl that grief and hardship had not been strong enough to conquer. Her hours of sadness were spent alone—hours when she was supposed to sleep, but instead, lay awake and sobbed without tears.

"Nonsense!" said Graydon. "Why do you think that of me?"

"Because everybody else thinks it," she said; "and because I am a very wise person. The men are not so charitable as I, señor. They say that you joined the army because of some woman whom you could not marry. I agree with them, except that it is she who would not marry you. Forgive me, if I have hurt you."

Impulsively, she put her hand upon his, her dark eyes full of pleading. The touch of her hand did not send a thrill through him; such contact, however, caused the blood to tingle in the quick veins of the girl. He merely sat and stared into space. After a moment, she drew her hand away.

"I am sorry," she said.

"There is a girl, Teresa," he said shortly.

"Yes, I know. Tell me about her."

"I can't," he exclaimed, bitterly. He arose and

walked quickly away. Teresa's dark eyes followed him in pity and wonder, aye, affection. Then she shook her head sadly and turned her attention elsewhere—not piqued, much to her own amazement.

Reinforcements came up two days later with the word that the commander in chief expected the campaign against Pilar to end within a week, and that hard fighting was ahead. The Red Cross people were following hard upon the heels of the regiment and field hospitals were to be established. This information was so suggestive of fierce and final combat that the men felt their sluggish blood leap wildly into life.

Every man in the band of newcomers was singing the praises of a wonderfully beautiful Red Cross nurse. The stories told of her charms were varied, but none lacked enthusiasm. Some said she was the daughter of a rich magnate come to do service in the cause of humanity; others were sure she was a great and beautiful actress who was sacrificing everything to conspicuous advertising. All, however, were agreed in the praise of her noble beauty.

The little detachment on guard turned up its collective nose and proudly pointed to Teresa Velasquez.

"Look at that," said Bob Spurrier. "Can she stack up with the hiking queen? Our girl is real quality. She's no common American. She's a grandee's daughter. There's royal blood in her. By thunder, gentlemen, she's blood kin to little Alfonso."

Teresa sought shelter from the curious though admiring eyes of the fresh arrivals.

"I don't like these new soldiers," she complained to

Graydon. "I wish they had not come. They talk of this beautiful nurse and they laugh at me. Oh, I wish I had something else to wear."

"Don't worry, little girl, you're worth ten nurses," said he.

"Alas, though I am dressed as a man, I do not feel as bold as one," she lamented.

The next day reinforcements came up and the whole command advanced upon Tilad Pass, where Pilar, at last, had been cornered. On the second of December a desperate conflict took place. Pilar was intrenched in the Pass near the celebrated rock known as El Obispo —"the Bishop." His resistance for a time was valorous and deadly. Corporal Parry saw him mount his horse behind the barricade, six hundred yards away. Parry was the best marksman in the regiment, and turning to his chief officer, asked if he should take a shot at him.

He fired and Pilar fell, face downward; and the Americans crushed the little band of insurgents. Gregorio Del Pilar was dead. His death in the great hills, after a most courageous battle against an overwhelming force, brought to an end a life that would have been worth much to the islands in after years. In his pockets were found valuable papers, letters and keepsakes. The letters were from his sweetheart, Dolores José, who lived at Dagupan, and they were tender in the extreme. Her lace handkerchief rested over his heart.

When the Americans, victorious and jubilant, fell back to camp, they had no small number of wounded to turn

over to the tender mercies of the little company of Red Cross nurses and the surgeons.

One of the most dangerously injured was Graydon Bansemer. He was one of the first to cross the danger line; a Mauser ball from a distant hill tore through his side, leaving an ugly gaping wound that foretold certain death.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BEAUTIFUL NURSE

When the beautiful and mysterious nurse whose fame had gone up with the soldiers into Tilad Pass, arrived with others to take charge of the Red Cross hospital, on the day following the battle, she found the man she had been longing to see for many weary, heartsick months. She found him dying.

To the surprise of the enthralled command, she fell in a dead swoon when she looked upon the pallid face of Graydon Bansemer. She had gone eagerly from one pallet to another, coming upon his near the last. One glance was enough. His face had been in her mind for months—just as she was seeing it now; she had lived in the horror of finding him cold in death.

It was Teresa Velasquez who first understood. She knew that Bansemer's one woman had found him at last. Her heart leaped with hatred for one brief instant, then turned soft and contrite. If she had learned to care for the big American herself during the hard days when he had been so tender, she also had learned that her worship was hopeless. She had felt his yearning love for another; now she was looking upon that other. While the attendants were bending over their unconscious companion, the Spanish girl stood guard over the man who had been her guardian, the man whose

life was going out before her miserable, exhausted eyes.

Jane Cable stirred with returning life; Teresa was quick to see that words not medicine would act as the restorative. She went swiftly to the American girl's side and, clasping her hands, cried sharply into her half conscious ears:

"He is not dead! He is alive! He needs you!"

The effect was magical. Life leaped into Jane's eyes, vigour into her body. She recovered from the swoon as mysteriously as she had succumbed to it. Her sudden breakdown had puzzled her companions. It is true that she was new in the service; she had seen but little of death and suffering; but, with all that, she was known to possess remarkable strength of purpose and fortitude. That she should collapse almost at the outset of her opportunities was the source of wonder and no little contempt among her fellow workers. The words of the strange girl in men's clothing opened the way to smart surmises. It was not long before everyone in the command knew that the "beautiful Red Cross nurse" was not wearing the garb of the vocation for the sake of humanity alone—in fact, it was soon understood that she did not care a straw for the rest of mankind so long as Graydon Bansemer needed her ministrations.

Ignoring the principles of the cause she served, she implored the doctors to confine their efforts to one man among all of them who suffered; she pleaded and stormed in turn, finally offering fabulous bribes in support of her demands. For the time being, she was

half crazed with fear and dread, woefully unworthy of her station, partially divorced from reason.

The more desperately wounded were left in the village with an adequate guard, the rest of the command departing with Major March. A temporary hospital was established in the convent. There were two doctors and four or five nurses, with a dozen soldiers under command of Lieutenant Bray. It was while the apparently dead Bansemer was being moved to the improvised hospital that Jane presented herself, distraught with fear, to the young Southerner who had so plainly shown his love for her. She pleaded with him to start at once for Manila with the wounded, supporting her extraordinary request with the opinion that they could not receive proper care from the two young surgeons. Bray was surprised and distressed; he could not misunderstand her motive.

He had gone on caring for her without suspecting that there was or had been another man; she had not confided in him during those weary, pleasant months since they left San Francisco behind them. To learn the true situation so suddenly and unexpectedly stunned his sensibilities; he found difficulty in grasping the importance of the change an hour or two had made. He had fought valiantly, even exultantly, in the Pass that morning, her face ever before him, her words of praise the best spoils of the victory, should they win. He had come down to the village with joy and confidence in his heart, only to find that he was not, and could never be, anything to her, while the life or memory of this fallen comrade stood as a barrier.

Bray's hour following the discovery that she had deliberately sought out and found this stricken private was the most bitter in his life. His pride suffered a shock that appalled him; his unconscious egotism, born of hereditary conquests, revolted against the thought that his progress toward her heart was to be turned aside by the intervention of a common soldier in the ranks. Gentleman though he was, he could not subdue the feeling of exultation that came over him when she approached with her plea. He knew that it was a base sense of power that made him feel that he could punish his pride's offender by either denying or granting her appeal. The attitude of self-sacrifice appealed to his wounded vanity; he was tempted to profit by an exhibition of his own pain and generosity.

He went with her into the convent and to the pallet on which was stretched the long, still figure of Graydon Bansemer. A surgeon was standing near by, studying the grey face with thoughtful eyes. Bray's first glance at the suffering face sent a thrill of encouragement through his veins. The man was beyond all human help; the grip of death was already upon his heart.

Then, the true manhood that had been his, through all generations, revolted against the thought that was in his mind. The man should not die if it was in his power to prevent; no matter what the cost to him, he would give his aid to her and hers. He tried to put aside the feeling that death was certain—and very soon, at that; he sought honestly to justify himself in the hope that Bansemer's life could be saved, after all.

"Leave me alone with the doctor, Miss Cable," he said. She was kneeling beside the man on the cot. Without a word, but with a dark appealing look into the Virginian's eyes, she arose and went swiftly away. "What chance has this poor fellow, doctor?"

"None whatever, sir. He'll be dead in an hour. I'm sorry, on her account. Strange case. I've heard she belongs to a fine family in the East. Poor devil, he's got an awful hole in his side."

"Have you made a careful examination? Is it possible that no vital spot has been touched?"

"We haven't had time for a thorough examination; it was better not to waste the time on him when there were others whom we have a chance to save."

"You will oblige me, doctor, by giving him the quickest and most careful attention. There may be a chance. He is one of the bravest men in the army. Don't let him die if there is a chance for him. Miss—er—the nurse—has asked if he can be moved to-day."

"No. But wait; I don't see why, if it will satisfy her. He will die anyhow, so why not tell her that we will start south with him to-morrow?"

"It isn't fair. She should be told the truth."

"He'd die, that's all—any way you put it."

"You will make the examination?"

"Yes, in—at once."

"But you—you feel that it is hopeless?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I'm—I'm sorry," said Bray, walking away. The doctor looked after him with a queer expression in his eyes and then called his confrère to the pallet.

Bray found Jane waiting for him outside the door; Teresa Velasquez was standing beside her, holding her hand.

"What does he say?" cried Jane, grey with anguish.

"He cannot be moved. There is no—but little hope, Miss Cable. They are to make another examination."

"He *must* be saved! He *must!* Let me go to him now. I will help. I will give my life to save his," she cried. Bray stood between her and the door, his arms extended.

"Don't go in now, I implore. Wait! There may be good news."

"He is everything in the world to me!" she moaned.

"Come with me," whispered Teresa. Bray looked at the Spanish girl, and a new light broke in upon his understanding. What was this refugee to Bansemer? The answer shot into his brain like a flash and he turned cold.

"Miss Cable, I think I understand your anxiety," he said, his voice trembling. "Won't you let this young lady take you away for half an hour or——"

"But I am a nurse! Why should I be kept from him? I am here to care for all of them," she protested.

"You are not fit to do duty just now," he said. "Miss Cable, I understand why you are here. It is noble of you. I am truly sorry that there is so little hope." He was leading her away from the building, leaving Teresa standing there with her eyes fastened upon the door with a look that could not be mistaken. "I would give my own life to have his spared for your sake, Jane. Forgive me. I would willingly give all I have in

life for you. But I am afraid it is impossible to save him."

"Don't say that," she whispered.

"*You*—you would be his wife?" he asked.

"No, that cannot be. I *could* not be his wife."

"You mean—he is married?"

"No, no! not that. You can't understand. I can never marry him—never!"

Bray struggled for a moment with the puzzle; his eyes went slowly to Teresa. Then he suddenly understood why Jane Cable would not marry the man she had come to find. He asked no questions of himself, but Teresa would have been the result of every conjecture had he done so.

"He might better be dead," he thought, his eyes hardening. "She's found him out. Gad, I hope——" but he put it from him.

Graydon Bansemer did not die within the hour, nor that day. The careful examination of the surgeons gave little additional hope; it did, however, reveal the fact that no vital organ had been destroyed or injured. The ball had torn a great hole in his left side and had gone through the body. Probing was not necessary. The flow of blood was frightful. There was a spark of life left on which to build a frail hope, and they worked with new interest.

The attention of everyone was directed to this tragic struggle; the efforts of all were lent to the successful end. Jane Cable, dogged and tireless, came to be his nurse, now that the life thread still held together. It is not the purpose of this narrative to dwell

upon the wretched, harrowing scenes and incidents of the wilderness hospital. The misery of those who watched and waited for death; the dread and suffering of those who gave this anxiety; the glow of spiritual light which hovered above the forms of men who had forgotten their God until now.

The first night passed. There were sleepless eyes to keep company with the faint moans and the scent of chloroform. Over the figure of Graydon Bansemer hung the eager, tense face of Jane Cable. Her will and mind were raised against the hand of death; down in her soul she was crying! "You shall not die!" and he was living, living on in spite of death. The still, white face gave back no sign of life; a faint pulse and an almost imperceptible respiration told of the unbroken thread. Hoping against hope!

Dawn came, and night again, and still the almost breathless girl urged her will against the inevitable. She had not slept, nor had she eaten of the food they brought to her. Two persons, a soldier and a girl, stood back and marvelled at her endurance and devotion; the harassed surgeons, new in experience themselves, found time to minister to the seeming dead man, their interest not only attracted by his remarkable vitality but by the romance attached to his hope of living.

That night he moved, and a low moan came from his lips. The Goddess of Good Luck had turned her face from the rest of the world for a brief instant to smile upon this isolated supplicant for favour. Jane's eyes and ears had served her well at last; she caught the change in him and her will grasped the hope with more

dogged tenacity than before. The word went out that there was a chance for him. Her vigil ended when Bray came to lead her away—ended because she dropped from exhaustion.

The next morning, after a dead sleep of hours, she returned to his side. The surgeon smiled and the nurse clasped her hands with tears in her eyes. Bansemer was breathing thickly and tossing in delirum. It was as if he had been lifted from the grave.

Lieutenant Bray was seated in front of the convent late that evening, moodily studying his own emotions. Teresa, still attired as she had been for weeks, hung about the chapel with the persistance of a friendless dog. He watched her and pitied her, even as he pitied himself for the wound he was nursing. What was to become of her? He called her to him.

"Señorita, they say he is better. Tell me, does it mean much to you?"

"Oh, señor, he has been noble and good and honourable. If he lives I shall always hold these weeks with him in absolute reverence."

"Then she does not understand?"

"She? What is there for her to understand? She loves him and he loves her. That is enough."

"She says she will not marry him. There must be a reason."

The girl's face darkened instantly and her breath came quickly.

"You—you think that I am the reason? Is it so? Because I am here in these hateful clothes? You would say that to me? How dare you!"

She burst out with tears of rage and shame and fled from his sight.

Jane came rapidly through the church door, out of the gloom and odour into the warm sunshine and the green glow of the world, her face bright, her eyes gleaming.

"He is conscious!" she cried. "He knows me!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SEPARATION OF HEARTS

When Graydon Bansemer opened his eyes upon the world for the second time—it was as if he had been born again—he looked up into the eager, wistful face of Jane Cable. It was too much for her to expect that he could see and understand at once; he would not know what had gone before, nor why she was there. His feeble glance took in her face with lifeless interest. Perhaps it was because he had seen her in that death-like dream; perhaps his weakness kept him from true realisation. In any event, he did no more than to allow the flicker of a smile to come into his eyes before he closed them again. Breathlessly, she waited for the lids to lift once more. She uttered his name softly, tenderly, time and again. As if hearing someone calling from a great distance, he moved and again looked upward, the consciousness of pain in his grey eyes. This time he stared hard at her; his eyes grew brighter and then darkened with wonder. At last she saw the look of surprise and joy and relief that she had been hungering for; he knew her and he was beginning to understand.

If he heard her while she knelt and thanked God for this first great ray of hope, he gave forth no sign. When she turned her eyes to his face again he was

asleep. But she went forth into the day with a song in her heart.

She looked about for Teresa. The girl was gone, no one knew whither. Bray alone could say that she had started toward the thicket. He pointed out the direction, but did not offer to accompany Jane when she hurried away to carry the good news to the Spanish girl who had been her staunch helper during the long vigil. Bray shook his puzzled head as he followed her with his gaze. It had come to him suddenly that the Spanish girl was not the solution to the puzzle, after all.

Jane found the slim boyish figure lying on the ground, deep in the wood. She had been crying and made no attempt to subdue her emotions when the American girl came up to her; instead, she bitterly poured out her woe into the ears of the other. She told her of Bray's insult—as she termed his unfortunate speculation—and she told how it came about.

"I am a good girl, Miss Cable," she cried. "I am of a noble family—not of the canaille. You do not believe it of me? No! He had no right to accuse me. I was a prisoner; Señor Bansemer was my rescuer. I loved him for it. See, I cannot help it, I cannot hide it from you. But he is yours. I have no claim. I do not ask it. Oh!" and here her voice rose to a wail of anguish, "can you not procure something else for me to wear? These rags are intolerable. I hate them! I cannot go back there unless I have——"

"We can give you a few garments, dear," said Jane. "Come! You shall wear the nurse's uniform. We are

"HIS FEEBLE GLANCE TOOK IN HER FACE WITH LIFELESS INTEREST"

to start on the long march to the coast to-morrow. They say that *all* of the wounded can be moved by that time."

It was three days, however, before the little company left the village and began its slow, irksome march across the country toward the coast where the ship was to pick up the wounded men and convey them to Manila. Native carriers, cheerful amigos since the disaster to Pilar, went forward with the stretchers, the hospital wagons and guard following. Travelling was necessarily slow and the halts were frequent. There were occasional shots from hidden riflemen, but there were no casualties. Food had been scarce; the commissary was thinly supplied for the hard trip. Lieutenant Bray grew strangely morose and indifferent. He was taciturn, almost unfriendly in his attitude toward everyone.

The little company stopped to rest in a beautiful valley, beside the banks of a swift stream. He watched Jane as she moved away from the stretcher which held Bansemer, following her to the edge of the stream where she had come to gaze pensively into the future.

"How is he?" he asked. She started and a warm glow came into her cheek.

"He is doing nicely. If he can bear up until we reach Manila, he will surely live. Are we going as rapidly as we should, Lieutenant Bray?"

"Quite, Miss Cable. It isn't an easy march, you must remember." After a long silence, he suddenly remarked: "Miss Cable, I've got a rather shameful confession to make. I've had some very base thoughts to

contend with. You may have guessed it or not, but I care a great deal for you—more than for anyone else I've ever known. You say he is to get well. For days I wished that he might die. Don't look like that, please. I couldn't help it. I went so far, at one stage, as to contemplate a delay in marching that might have proved fatal to him. I thought of that way and others of which I can't tell you. Thank God, I was man enough to put them away from me! Wait, please! Let me finish. You have said you will not marry him. I don't ask why you will not. I love you. Will you be my wife?"

She stared at him with consternation in her eyes. He had gone on so rapidly that she could not check his rapid speech. Her hand went to her brow and a piteous smile tried to force itself to her lips.

"I am sorry," she said at last. "I am sorry you have spoken to me of it. I have felt for some time that you—you cared for me. No, Lieutenant Bray, I cannot be your wife."

"I know you love him," he said.

"Yes, it is plain. I have not tried to hide it."

"You must understand why I asked you to be my wife, knowing that you love him. It was to hear it from your own lips, so that I would not go through life with the feeling, after all, that it might have been. Will you tell me the reason why you cannot marry him? He must love you."

"Lieutenant Bray, he would marry me to-morrow, I think, if I were to consent. It isn't that. It would not be right for me to consent. You profess to love me.

I have seen it in your eyes—oh, I have learned much of men in the past few months—and I determined, if you ever asked me to marry you, to ask a question in return. Do you really know who I am?"

He looked his surprise. "Why, the daughter of David Cable, of course."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"His stepdaughter?"

"Not even that. You come from a proud Southern family. I do not know who my parents were."

"Good Heaven, you—you don't mean you were a waif?"

"A waif without a name, Lieutenant Bray. This is not self-abasement; it is not the parading of misfortune. It is because you have made the mistake of loving me. If you care less for me now than you did before, you will spread this information throughout the army."

"Believe me, I am not that sort."

"Thank you. Knowing what you now do, could you ask me to be your wife?"

"Don't put it just that way," he stammered.

"Ah, I see. It was a cruel question. And yet it proves that you do not love as Graydon Bansemer loves."

"Some day you may find out all about your parents and be happy. You may have been abducted and——" he was saying, his face white and wet. Somehow he felt that he was chastening himself.

"Perhaps," she said quietly. "I might not have told you this had not the story been printed in every

newspaper in the States just before I left. You see, I did not know it until just a few months ago. I thought you might have read of me. I—I am so notorious."

"Jane, dear Jane, you must not feel that way!" he cried, as she started quickly away. "It's——" But she turned and motioned for him to cease. There were tears in her eyes. He stood stock still. "She's wonderful!" he said to himself, as she walked away. "Even now, I believe I could—Pshaw! It ought not to make any difference! If it wasn't for my family—What's in a name, anyway? A name——" He started to answer his own question, but halted abruptly, squared his shoulders and then with true Southern, military bearing strode away, murmuring:

"A name *is* something; yes, family *is* everything."

Jane went at once to Graydon. His great grey eyes smiled a glad welcome. She took his hand in hers and sat upon the ground beside him, watching his face until they were ready to resume the journey.

"Would it not be better if he were to die?" she found herself wondering, with strange inconstancy to her purpose. "Why could it not have been I instead of he? How hard it will be for us to live after this. Dear, dear Graydon, if—if I only were different from what I am."

Not a word of his father's conduct toward her, not a word of blame for the blow his father had struck. She held him to no account for the baseness of that father; only did she hold herself unfit to be his wife. All of the ignominy and shame fell to her lot, none to the well-born son of the traducer.

Fortune and strength went hand in hand for the next two days and the famished, worn-out company came to the coast. The wounded men were half-delirious once more for lack of proper attention and the hardships of travel. But the ill-wind had spent its force. Bray's instructions were to place his charges on board ship at San Fernando de Union, and then await further orders in the little coast town. It meant good-bye to Jane, and that meant more to him than he was willing to admit, despite all that she had said to him. He went to her when the ship was ready to leave port.

"Good-bye!" he said. "I'm more grieved than I can tell you, because I believe you think I am a cad."

"Lieutenant Bray, a cad never would have helped me as you have helped me, in spite of yourself. Good-bye!"

He went out of her life in that moment.

There were vexatious delays, however, before sailing. Almost at the last moment Jane was approached by Teresa Velasquez, now partly dressed as a Red Cross nurse. The Spanish girl was nervous and uneasy. Her dark eyes held two ever changing lights—one sombre, the other bright and piercing.

"I have decided to wait for the next ship," she announced briefly.

"You are not going with us?" cried Jane in surprise and distress. "What has happened?"

"It is impossible; I cannot go with you. Pray do not ask for my reason. Good-bye. Will you say good-bye to—to him for me?"

Jane was silent for a long time, studying the eyes of the Spanish girl.

"I think I understand," she said at last, taking Teresa's hands in hers.

"It is better that it be ended here," said Teresa. "I have endured it as long as I can. You have been good to me, and I want to say good-bye while there is love for you in my heart. I am afraid to stay near you —and him. Don't you see? I cannot go on in this way."

"Oh, Teresa!"

"Yes, yes, I know it is wrong, but how can I help it? I've loved him ever since I first saw him—saved his life." Jane was astounded. The thrust pierced her to the quick.

"Saved his life?"

"Yes, though he does not know it. It was when we were prisoners of the Filipinos. My poor brother was dying. From the convent Aguinaldo and his men were watching and directing the fight on the plaza. They paid no attention to me—a girl. The noise of the fighting men was terrible, and I climbed up to a window where I could see. Suddenly, below me, I saw two men fighting apart from the struggling mass. In an instant it flashed through my mind that the Filipino was overpowering the other—was going to kill him. Although I hated them equally, there was something in the young soldier's face—I could not see him murdered. I seized a pistol that was lying near me and fired; the Filipino fell. In terror of the deed and fear of discovery, I ran to my brother. In a mo-

ment the Americans broke into the convent. You know the rest."

Jane was suffering the keenest pangs of jealousy, and asked, excitedly:

"You—you did that?"

"And finally, when I had learned to care for him and he was wounded, to have been denied the right of nursing him back to life—my place usurped by you. Surely, I have as much to be proud of as you and I love him a great deal more!"

"As much to be proud of——" Jane was saying, for the moment all the warmth gone from her voice, the flame from her cheeks; but her meaning could not have been understood by the other who proudly, defiantly tossed back her head. Beautiful indeed was this brown-skinned, black-eyed girl, as she stood there pleading her rights to an unrequited love—a heart already tenanted by another, and that other, the woman before her.

"Now, can you imagine," the girl went on, "how it has hurt me to see you caring for him, to see his eyes forever searching for you? No?" They were silent a moment. A wistful look was in her eyes now, and her voice unmistakably reconcilable when she resumed: "Ah, he was so good and true when I was alone with them—before you came! I pray God, now, that he may be well and that you may make him happy."

"Alas, I am afraid that can never be! You cannot understand, and I cannot explain."

"Your family objects because he is poor and a common soldier? Yes?" She laughed bitterly, a green

light in her eyes. "If it were I, no one could keep me from belonging to him—I would——"

"Don't! Don't say it! You don't understand!" Jane reiterated.

"Dios, how I loved him! I would have gone through my whole life with him! He must have known it, too."

"He was true to me," said Jane, her figure straightening involuntarily, a new gleam in her eyes.

"Ah, you are lucky, señorita! I love you, and I could hate you so easily! Go! Go! Take him with you and give him life! Forget me as I shall forget you both!" And impulsively taking from round her neck an Agnus Dei which she was wearing, she placed it in Jane's hands, and added: "Give this to him, please, and do not forget to tell him that I sent good-bye and good luck."

Jane would have kissed her had not the blazing eyes of the other forbade. They merely clasped hands, and Teresa turned away.

"My uncle lives in Manila. He will take me to Madrid. We cannot live here with these pigs of Americans about us," she said shortly. A moment later she was lost in the crowd.

Jane's heart was heavy when the ship moved away. Her eyes searched through the throng for the slight figure of the girl who had abandoned a lost cause.

CHAPTER XXVII

"IF THEY DON'T KILL YOU"

Jane had been a nurse in the Red Cross society for a little more than six weeks. She was inexperienced but willing and there was such urgent need for nurses that the army accepted any and all who seemed capable of development under the training of experts. There had been tremendous opposition on the part of the Harbins, but in the end, finding her unalterably determined, the colonel permitted her to go out in the service. She was sent forth on the special expedition in the wake of Major March's forces, her secret desire being to be near Graydon Bansemer in event of his injury. She gave no heed to their protest that the name of Bansemer should be hateful to her; she ignored the ugly remarks of her aunt and the angry reproaches of the colonel. It was more the spirit of spite than any other motive which at last compelled him to accept the situation; he even went so far as to growl to his wife: "Cursed good riddance, that's what I say. I didn't want her to come in the first place."

But when, after a month, she brought Bansemer back to the city, wounded almost to death, the heart of the soldier was touched. It was Colonel Harbin who wrestled with the hospital authorities and, after two or three days, had her installed regularly as a nurse for

Bansemer, a concession not willingly granted. Those days were like years to her. She was thin and worn when she came down from the north, but she was haggard with anxiety and despair when the two days of suspense were ended.

Ethel Harbin was her ablest ally. This rather lawless young person laid aside the hearts with which she was toying and bent her every endeavour to the cause of romance. It was not long before every young officer in the city was more or less interested in the welfare of Graydon Bansemer. She threw a fine cloak of mystery about the "millionaire's son" and the great devotion of her cousin. The youth of the army followed Ethel to and from the hospital for days and days; without Ethel it is quite doubtful if anybody could have known what a monstrous important personage Private Bansemer really was.

At the end of a fortnight he was able to sit up and converse with his nurse and the occasional Ethel. Dr. G——, chief of the ward, remarked to Colonel Harbin:

"He'll get well, of course. He can't help it. I never knew before what society could do for a fellow. He's got a society nurse and he is visited by a society despot. It beats Christian Science all to pieces."

"Do you think he will be able to do any more fighting? Will he be strong enough?"

"I don't see why. The government won't let him do it, that's all. He can claim a pension and get out of service with an honourable discharge—and maybe a medal. He'll be strong enough, however. That fellow could go on a hike inside of a month."

"I suppose we'll all be going home before long. This war is about over," growled Harbin.

"No sirree! We'll be fighting these fellows for ten years. Ah, there's your daughter, Colonel. Good-day."

With the first returning strength, freed from lassitude and stupor, Graydon began whispering joyous words of love to Jane. His eyes were bright with the gladness that his pain had brought. She checked his weak outbursts at first, but before many days had passed she was obliged to resort to a firmness that shocked him into a resentful silence. She was even harsh in her command. It cut her to the quick to hurt him, but she was steeling herself against the future.

When he was able to walk out in the grounds, she withdrew farther into the background of their daily life. He hungered for her, but she began to avoid him with a strange aloofness that brought starvation to his heart. While she was ever attentive to his wants, her smile lacked the tenderness he had known in the days of danger, and her face was strangely sombre and white.

"Jane," he said to her one day as he came in from his walk and laid down his crutches, "this can't go on any longer. What is the matter? Don't you love me—not at all?"

She stood straight and serious before him, white to the lips, her heart as cold as ice.

"I love you, Graydon, with all my soul. I shall always love you. Please, please, don't ask any more of me. You understand, don't you? We cannot be as

we once were—never. That is ended. But, you—you *must* know that I love you."

"It is sheer madness, dearest, to take that attitude. What else in the world matters so long as we love one another? I felt at first that I could not ask you to be my wife after what my father did that night. That was as silly of me as this is of you. I did not contend long against my love. You have never been out of my mind, night or day. I was tempted more than once to desert—but that was impossible, you know. It was the terrible eagerness to go back to you and compel you to be mine. My father did you a grave wrong. He——"

"But my father did me a graver wrong, Graydon. I have thought it all out. I have no right to be alive, so what right have I to be any man's wife?"

"Nonsense, dearest. You are alive, and you live for me, as I do for you. You have saved my life; you must save my love. These last few weeks have knit our lives together so completely that neither of us has the right to change God's evident purpose. I love you for yourself, Jane. That is enough. There has not been an instant in which I have felt that any circumstance could alter my hope to marry you. You say you have no name. You forget that you may have mine, dearest—and it is not much to be proud of, I fear, in the light of certain things. You must be my wife, Jane."

"I cannot, Graydon. That is final. Don't! Don't plead, dear. It will not avail. Look into my eyes. Don't you see that I mean it, Graydon?"

"By Heaven, Jane, your eyes are lying to me. You can't mean what is back of them. It's cruel—it's wrong."

"Hush! you must not become excited. You are far from strong, and I am still your nurse. Be——"

"You are my life—you are everything. I can't give you up. It's ridiculous to take this stand. Be sensible. Look at it from my point of view."

"There is only one point of view and love has nothing to do with it. Come, let us talk of something else. Have you heard from your—your father? Does he know you've been injured?"

He looked long into her tense face and then muttered, with the sullen despair of the sick: "I don't know. I've had no word from anyone."

"The despatches have doubtless given your name. One of the Chicago correspondents was talking about you recently. Your father will surely write to you now."

"Are you eager to have him do so? I should think you'd hate his name. I can't help caring for dad, Jane. I tried to curse him one time, but he really has been good to me. I don't see how he can have done the things they say he's done."

"There may be a mistake."

"That's good of you, dear, but you forget your mother's statements and all that Rigby says—all that. Oh, I've gone over all of it, and I am convinced. I wonder what has become of him. He was afraid of—of—well, there was talk of an arrest before I left. I have not looked at a newspaper since I saw the head-

lines that awful morning. God, how they must have hurt you!"

"I, too, have not looked at a newspaper since then, Graydon," she said simply. He smiled wearily and there was response in her eyes.

He took her hand in his and they sat silently side by side on the bench for half an hour, their thoughts far away but of one another.

"Graydon," she said at last, "are you going to remain in the army?"

"No, I am through with it. My discharge is to be recommended. I'm disabled."

"You will be as strong as ever, dear."

"Do you want me to stick to the army? I am only a private."

"You can do greater things out in the world, I know. You will be a great man if you don't lose heart, Graydon."

"I can't be a soldier, dear, and support a wife on the pay I get," he said with a smile.

"You shouldn't marry,"

"But I am going to marry," he said.

"I have decided to become a nurse. It is my intention to give my whole life to——"

"The Red Cross?"

"No. The hospitals at home—the hospitals for the poor and homeless."

Ethel Harbin was coming through the grounds toward them. Her face was clouded by a dark frown and she was visibly excited.

"It's all off," she announced as she came up.

"Where is the usual hero?" asked Graydon.

"I'm through with the real army. They've dismissed me. That is father and mother have. They are driving me into the Salvation Army," she exclaimed, seating herself beside Graydon. "I wish I were Jane and my own mistress."

"Dear me, Ethel, what an ambition!" said Jane. "What has happened to upset you so?"

"Father has."

"I should have asked who, not what."

"I suppose they expect me to marry a Salvation Army man. They say Harry isn't good enough. I think he is a very moral young man."

"Harry? Who is Harry?"

"Why, haven't you heard? Harry Soper. I'm engaged to him."

"The lieutenant?"

"Certainly. He's going to be promoted, though, if he ever gets on the firing line. It's not his fault that he has to do duty in the walled city. He's aching to get out and fight. But father——" Here she paused, her lips coming together with a firmness that boded ill.

"Colonel Harbin doesn't approve?"

"No—he says Harry is a 'little pup.' It's outrageous, Jane."

"Don't cry, dear. The world is full of men."

"Not for me," said Ethel dolefully. "I've picked Harry out of a hundred or more and I think my discrimination ought to be considered. I'm the one to be satisfied. Father has no——"

"But how about that young fellow back in New York? You used to say he was the only one."

"He is the only one in New York. But look how far off he is! It takes weeks for his letters to get to me."

"But he writes every day."

"Harry telephones every day. I tell you, Jane, the voice has a good deal to do with it. You like to *hear* a fellow say nice things. It beats ink all to pieces. It will go hard with him, perhaps, but he's young. He'll get over it."

"You are young, too. That is why you have gotten over George."

"I'm not as young as I was. But I've decided on Harry. If father doesn't let us get married right away, I'm liable to get over him, too. It's silly doing that all the time; one might never get married, you know. But father is firm. He says I can't, and he says he'll kick Harry into the middle of next summer. Father says I shall not marry into the regular army. He says they don't make good husbands. I've got the joke on him, though. He appealed to mother, and she forgot herself and said the same thing. They were quarrelling about it when I left the hotel. It was an awful jar to father. For two cents I'd elope with Harry."

"It would be pretty difficult for an officer on duty to elope, don't you think?" asked Graydon, amused.

"Not if he loved the girl. He does, too. But I haven't told you the worst. Mother says I am being absolutely spoiled out here in Manila, and she says

flatly, that she's going to take me back to the States. Isn't it awful?"

"Back to the fellow in New York?" smiled Jane encouragingly..

Ethel thought for a moment and a dear little smile came into her troubled eyes.

"I hope he hasn't gone and fallen in love with some other girl," she said.

It was true, as Jane soon learned, that Mrs. Harbin had concluded to return to the United States with Ethel. Jane's aunt had grown immeasurably tired of Manila —and perhaps a little more tired of the Colonel. It was she who aroused the Colonel's antipathy to little Lieutenant Soper. She dwelt upon the dire misfortune that was possible if Ethel continued to bask in the society of "those young ninnies." The Colonel developed a towering rage and a great fear that Ethel might become fatally contaminated before she could be whisked off of the island. It was decided that Mrs. Harbin and Ethel should return to the United States soon after the first of March, to take up their residence in New York City.

"Mother wants to be a soldier's widow—on parole," sniffed Ethel, almost audibly enough for her father's ears.

Mrs. Harbin at once informed Jane that she was expected to return with them. She demurred at first, purely for the sake of appearances, but in the end agreed to tender her resignation to the Red Cross society. The knowledge that Graydon Bansemer's discharge was soon forthcoming and that he intended to

return to America in the spring had more to do with this decision than she was willing to admit. She therefore announced her ambition to become a trained nurse and gave no heed to Mrs. Harbin's insinuating smile.

Letters, of late, from Mrs. Cable, had been urging her to return to Chicago; David Cable was far from well—breaking fast—and he was wearing out his heart in silent longing for her return. He wrote to her himself that he expected to retire from active business early in the year, and that his time and fortune from that day on would be devoted to his family. He held out attractive visions of travel, of residence abroad, of endless pleasure which they could enjoy together.

Jane had written to them that she would not live in Chicago—any place else in the world, she said—and they understood. There was no word of James Bansemer in all these letters. She was always daughter to them and they were father and mother.

Graydon Bansemer one day received three letters—all from Chicago. He knew the handwriting on the envelope of each. Three men had written to him, his father, Elias Droom, and Rigby. A dark scowl came over his face as he looked at the Rigby envelope. It was the first letter that he opened and read. Jane was sitting near by watching the expression on his face.

"It's from Rigby," he said as he finished.

"What does he say?" she asked anxiously.

"He says he is my devoted friend for life," replied Graydon bitterly. "I can't forget, though, Jane. He is not the sort of friend I want."

"He thought it was for the best, Graydon."

"Yes, and he may have thought he was my friend, too. This letter says as much. But I like an enemy better, dear. You know what to expect of an enemy at all times. Here's one from Elias Droom—old Elias." Droom scrawled a few words of cheer to the young soldier, urging him not to re-enlist, but to come home, at the end of his two years. He enclosed a letter from Mr. Clegg, in which that gentleman promised to put Graydon in charge of their New York office, if he would take the place. This news sent his spirits bounding. Tears of a gratefulness he never expected to feel sprang to his eyes. Jane's happiness was a reflection of his own.

James Bansemer's letter was not read aloud to Jane. When he had finished the perusal of the long epistle he folded it and stuck it away in his pocket. His eyes seemed a bit wistful and his face drawn, but there was no word to let her know what had been written by the man who had denounced her.

"He is well," was all he said. He did not tell her that his father had urged him to go into business in the Philippines, saying that he would provide ample means with which to begin and carry on any enterprise he cared to exploit. One paragraph cut Graydon to the quick:

"I'd advise you to steer clear of Chicago. If they don't kill you in the Philippines, you're better off there. They hate us here."

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOMEWARD BOUND

Early in March a great transport sailed from Manila Bay, laden with sick and disabled soldiers—the lame, the healthless and the mad. It was not a merry shipload, although hundreds were rejoicing in the escape from the hardships of life in the islands. Graydon Bansemer was among them, weak and distrustful of his own future—albeit a medal of honour and the prospect of an excellent position were ahead of him. His discharge was assured. He had served his country briefly, but well, and he was not loath to rest on his insignificant laurels and to respect the memory of the impulse which had driven him into service. In his heart he felt that time would make him as strong as ever, despite the ugly scar in his side. It was a question with him, however, whether time could revive the ambition that had been smothered during the first days of despair. He looked ahead with keen inquiry, speculating on the uncertain whirl of fortune's wheel.

Jane was obduracy itself in respect to his pleadings. A certain light in her eyes had, at last, brought conviction to his soul. He began to fear—with a mighty pain—that she would not retreat from the stand she had taken.

She went on board with Mrs. Harbin and Ethel. There were other wives on board who had found temporary

release from irksome but voluntary enlistment. Jane's resignation from the Red Cross society deprived her of the privileges which would have permitted her to see much of Graydon. They were kept separated by the transport's regulations; he was a common soldier, she of the officer's mess. The restrictions were cruel and relentless. They saw but little of one another during the thirty days; but their thoughts were busy with the days to come. Graydon grew stronger and more confident as the ship forged nearer to the Golden Gate; Jane more wistful and resigned to the new purpose which was to give life another colouring, if possible. They were but one day out from San Francisco when he found the opportunity to converse with her as she passed through the quarters of the luckless ones.

"Jane, I won't take no for an answer this time," he whispered eagerly; "you must consent. Do you want to ruin both of our lives?"

"Why will you persist, Graydon? You know I cannot——"

"You can. Consider me as well as yourself. I want you. Isn't that enough? You can't ask for more love than I will give. To-morrow we'll be on shore. I have many things to do before I am at liberty to go my way. Won't you wait for me? It won't be long. We can be married in San Francisco. Mr. and Mrs. Cable are to meet you. Tell them, dearest, that you want to go home with me. The home won't be in Chicago; but it will be home just the same."

"Dear Graydon, I am sorry—I am heartsick. But I cannot—I dare not."

Graydon Bansemer was a man as well as a lover. He gave utterance to a perfectly man-like expression, coming from the bottom of his tried soul:

"It's damned nonsense, Jane!" He said it so feelingly that she smiled even as she shook her head and moved away. "I'll see you to-morrow on shore?" he called, repentant and anxious.

"Yes!"

The next day they landed. Graydon waved an anxious farewell to her as he was hurried off with the lame, the halt, and the blind. He saw David Cable and his wife on the pier and, in spite of himself, he could not repel an eager, half-fearful glance through the crowd of faces. Although he did not expect his father to meet him, he dreaded the thought that he might be there, after all. To his surprise, as he stood waiting with his comrades, he saw David Cable turn suddenly, and, after a moment's hesitation, wave his hand to him, the utmost friendship in his now haggard face. His heart thumped joyously at this sign of amity.

As the soldiers moved away, Cable paused and looked after him, a grim though compassionate expression in his eyes. He and Jane were ready to confront the customs officers.

"I wonder if he knows about his father," mused he. Jane caught her breath and looked at him with something like terror in her eyes. He abruptly changed the subject, deploring his lapse into the past from which they were trying to shield her.

The following morning Graydon received a note from Cable, a frank but carefully worded message, in which

he was invited to take the trip East in the private car of the President of the Pacific, Lakes & Atlantic. Mrs. Cable joined her husband in the invitation; one of the sore spots in Graydon's conscience was healed by this exhibition of kindness. Moreover, Cable stated that his party would delay departure until Graydon's papers were passed upon and he was free from red tape restrictions.

The young man, on landing, sent telegrams to his father and Elias Droom, the latter having asked him to notify him as soon as he reached San Francisco. Graydon was not a little puzzled by the fact that the old clerk seemed strangely at variance with his father, in respect to the future. In both telegrams, he announced that he would start East as soon as possible.

There was a letter from Droom awaiting him at headquarters. It was brief, but it specifically urged him to accept the place proposed by Mr. Clegg, and reiterated his pressing command to the young man to stop for a few days in Chicago. In broad and characteristically uncouth sentences, he assured him that while the city held no grudge against him, and that the young men would welcome him with open arms—his groundless fears to the contrary—he would advise him to choose New York. There was one rather sentimental allusion to "old Broadway" and another to "Grennitch," as he wrote it. In conclusion, he asked him to come to the office, which was still in the U—— Building, adding that if he wished to avoid the newspaper men he could find seclusion at the old rooms in Wells Street. "Your father," he said, "has given up his apartment and has

taken lodgings. I doubt very much if he will be willing to share them with you, in view of the position he has assumed in regard to your future; although he says you may always call upon him for pecuniary assistance." A draft for five hundred dollars was enclosed with the letter.

Graydon was relieved to find that there would be no irksome delay attending his official discharge. When he walked out a "free man," as he called it, a gentlemanly pension attorney locked arms with him, and hung on like a leech, until the irritated soldier shook him off with less consideration than vigour.

He went directly to the Palace Hotel, where he knew the Cables were stopping. David Cable came down in response to his card. The two men shook hands, each eyeing the other inquiringly for an instant.

"I want you to understand, Graydon, that I am your friend. Nothing has altered my esteem for you."

"Thank you, Mr. Cable. I hardly expected it."

"I don't see why, my boy. But, we'll let all that pass. Mrs. Cable wants to see you."

"Before we go any farther I want to make myself clear to you. I still hope to marry Jane. She says she cannot become my wife. You understand why, sir. I only want to tell you that her objections are not objections to me. She is Jane and I love her, sir, because she is."

"I hope you can win her over, Graydon. She seems determined, however, and she is unhappy. You can't blame her, either. If there were base or common blood

in her, it wouldn't make much difference to her pride. But she's made of other material. She's serious about it and I am sensible enough to get her point of view. She wouldn't want to marry you with the prospect of an eternal shadow that neither of you could get off of your minds. I sometimes wish that I knew who were her parents."

"It doesn't matter, so far as I am concerned."

"I know, my boy, but she is thinking of the heritage that comes down from her mother to her. You'll never know how it hurt me to find that I had no daughter. It hurts her worse a thousandfold to learn that she has no mother. I trust it may not happen that you will lose her as a wife."

"If I really thought I couldn't win her, sir, it would ruin my ambition in life. She loves me, I'm sure."

"By the way, Clegg tells me he has offered you the New York office. It is a splendid chance for you. You will take it, of course."

"I expect to talk it over with Mr. Clegg when I get to Chicago."

"Come up to our apartments. Oh, pardon me, Graydon, I want to ask you if you have sufficient money to carry you through? I know the pay of a private is not great——"

"Thank you. I have saved nearly all of it. My father has sent me a draft for five hundred. I don't expect to use it, of course."

"Your father?" asked Cable, with a quick, searching look.

"And then I did save something in Chicago, strange

as it may seem," said Bansemer, with a smile. "I have a few of your five per cents. I trust the road is all right?"

The Cables left San Francisco on the following day, accompanied by the Harbins and Graydon Bansemer. There was no mistaking the joy which lay under restraint in the faces and attitude of the Cables. David Cable had grown younger and less grey, it seemed, and his wife was glowing with a new and subdued happiness. Graydon, sitting with the excited Ethel—who was rejoicing in the prospect of New York and the other young man—studied the faces of the three people who sat at the other end of the coach.

Time had wrought its penalties. Cable was thin and his face had lost its virility, but not its power. His eyes never left the face of Jane, who was talking in an earnest, impassioned manner, as was her wont in these days. Frances Cable's face was a study in transition. She had lost the colour and vivacity of a year ago, although the change was not apparent to the casual observer. Graydon could see that she had suffered in many ways. The keen, eager appeal for appreciation was gone from her eyes; in its stead was the appeal for love and contentedness. Happiness, now struggling against the smarting of a sober pain, was giving a sweetness to her eyes that had been lost in the ambitious glitter of other days. Ethel bored him—a most unusual condition. He longed to be under the tender, quieting influences at the opposite end of the car. He even resented his temporary exile.

"Jane," Cable was saying with gentle insistence;

"it is not just to him. He loves you and you are not doing the right thing by him."

"You'll find I am right in the end," she said stubbornly.

"I can't bear the thought of your going out as a trained nurse, dear," protested Frances Cable. "There is no necessity. You can have the best of homes and in any place you like. Why waste your life in——"

"Waste, mother? It would be wasting my life if I did not find an occupation for it. I can't be idle. I can't exist forever in your love and devotion."

"Good Lord, child, don't be foolish," exclaimed Cable. "That hurts me more than you think. Everything we have is yours."

"I'm sorry I said it, daddy. I did not mean it in that way. It isn't the money, you know, and it isn't the home, either. No, you must let me choose my own way of living the rest of my life. I came from a foundling hospital. A good and tender nurse found me there and gave me the happiest years of my life. I shall go back there and give the rest of my years to children who are less fortunate than I was. I want to help them, mother, just as you did—only it is different with me."

"You'll see it differently some day," said Mrs. Cable earnestly.

"I don't object to your helping the foundlings, Jane," said Cable, "but I don't see why you have to be a nurse to do it. Other women support such causes and not as nurses, either. It's——"

"It's my way, daddy, that's all," she said firmly.

"Then why, in the name of Heaven, were you so unkind as to keep that poor boy over there alive when he might have died and ended his misery? You nursed him back to life only to give him a wound that cannot be healed. You would ruin his life, Jane. Is it fair? Damn me, I'm uncouth and hard in many ways—I had a hard, unkind beginning—but I really believe I've got more heart in me than you have."

"David!" exclaimed his wife. Jane looked at the exasperated man in surprise.

"Now here's what I intend you to do: you owe me something for the love that I give to you; you owe Graydon something for keeping him from dying. If you want to go into the nursing business, all right. But I'm going to demand some of your devotion for my own sake before that time comes. I've loved you all of your life——"

"And I've loved you, daddy," she gasped.

"And I'm going to ask you to begin your nursing career by attending to me. I'm sick for want of your love. I'm giving up business for the sake of enjoying it unrestrained. Your mother and I expect it. We are going abroad for our health and we are going to take you with us. Right now is where you begin your career as a nurse. You've got to begin by taking care of the love that is sick and miserable. We want it to live, my dear. Now, I want a direct decision—at once: will you take charge of two patients on a long-contemplated trip in search of love and rest—wages paid in advance?"

She looked at him, white-faced and stunned. He was

putting it before her fluently and in a new light. She saw what it was that he considered that she owed to them—the love of a daughter, after all.

An hour later she stood with Graydon on the rear platform of the car. He was trying to talk calmly of the country through which they were rushing and she was looking pensively down the rails that slipped out behind them.

"We'll be in Chicago in three days," he remarked.

"Graydon, I have decided to go abroad for five or six months before starting upon my work. They want me so much, you see," she said, her voice a trifle uncertain.

"I wish I could have some power to persuade you," he said. Changing his tone to one of brisk interest, he went on. "It is right, dear. It will do you great good and it will be a joy to them. I'll miss you."

"And I shall miss you, Graydon," she said, her eyes very solemn and wistful.

"Won't you—won't you give me the promise I want, Jane?" he asked eagerly. She placed her hand upon his and shook her head.

"Won't you be good to me, Graydon? Don't make it so hard for me. Please, please don't tell me again that you love me."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WRECKAGE

The spring floods delayed the Eastern Express, bringing the party to Chicago nearly a day late. The Cables and the Harbins went at once to the Annex, where David Cable had taken rooms. They had given up their North Side home some months before, both he and his wife retiring into the seclusion that a great hotel can afford when necessary.

Graydon hurried off to his father's office, eager, yet half fearing to meet the man who was responsible for the broken link in his life—this odd year. He recalled, as he drove across town, that a full year had elapsed since he spent that unforgettable night in Elias Droom's uncanny home. Was he never to forget that night—that night when his soul seemed even more squalid than the home of the recluse?

All of his baggage, except a suit case, had been left at the station. He did not know what had become of his belongings in the former home of his father. Nor, for that matter, did he care.

At the U—— Building he ventured a diffident greeting to the elevator boy, whom he remembered. The boy looked at him quizzically and nodded with customary aloofness. Graydon found himself hoping that he would not meet Bobby Rigby. He also wondered,

as the car shot up, how his father had managed to escape from the meshes that were drawn about him on the eve of his departure. His chances had looked black and hopeless enough then; yet, he still maintained the same old offices in the building. His name was on the directory board downstairs. Graydon's heart gave a quick bound with the thought that his father had proved the charges false after all.

Elias Droom was busy directing the labours of two able-bodied men and a charwoman, all of whom were toiling as they had never toiled before. The woman was dusting law books and the men were packing them away in boxes. The front room of the suite was in a state of devastation. A dozen boxes stood about the floor; rugs and furniture were huddled in the most remote corner awaiting the arrival of the "second-hand man"; the floor was littered with paper. Droom was directing operations with a broken umbrella. It seemed like a lash to the toilers.

"Now, let's get through with this room," he was saying in his most impelling way. "The men will be here for the boxes at four. I don't want 'em to wait. This back room stuff we'll put in the trunks. Look out there! Don't you see that nail?"

Eddie Deever, with his usual indolence, was seated upon the edge of the writing table in the corner, smoking his cigarette, and commenting with rash freedom upon the efforts of the perspiring slaves.

"How long are you going to keep these things in the warehouse?" he asked of Droom.

"I'm not going to keep them there at all. They be-

long to Mr. Bansemer. He'll take them out when he has the time."

"He's getting all the time he wants now, I guess." commented Eddie. "Say, talking about time, I'll be twenty-one next Tuesday."

"Old enough to marry."

"I don't know about that. I'm getting pretty wise. Do you know, I've just found out how old Rosie Keating is? She's twenty-nine. Gee, it's funny how a fellow always gets stuck on a girl older than himself! Still, she's all right. I'm not saying a word against her. She wouldn't be twenty-nine if she could help it."

"I suppose it's off between you, then."

"I don't know about that, either. We lunched at Rector's to-day. That don't look like it's off, does it? Four sixty-five, including the tip. She don't look twenty-nine, does she?"

"I've never noticed her."

"Never—well, holy mackerel! You must be blind then. She says she's seen you in the elevator a thousand times. Never noticed *her?* Gee!"

"I mean, I've never noticed anyone who looked less than twenty-nine. By the way, do you ever see Mr. Rigby? I believe she is in his office."

"I don't go to Rigby's any more," said Eddie, with sudden stiffness. "He's a cheap skate."

"I *heard* he threw you out of the office one day," with a dry cackle.

"He did not! We couldn't agree in certain things regarding the Bansemer affair, that's all. I told him to go to the devil, or words to that effect."

"Something loose about your testimony, I believe, wasn't there?"

"Oh, the whole thing doesn't amount to a whoop. I'm trying to get Rosie another job. She oughtn't to write in there with that guy."

"Well, you're twenty-one. Why don't you open an office of your own? Your mother's got plenty of money. She can buy you a library and a sign, and that is all a young lawyer needs in Chicago."

"Mother wants me to run for alderman in our ward, next spring. I'll be able to vote at that election."

"You've got as much right in the council as some others, I suppose."

"Sure, mother owns property. The West Side ought to be as well represented as the North Side. Property interests is what we need in the council. That's——"

"I don't care to hear a political speech, boy. Are you busy this afternoon?"

"No. I wouldn't be here if I was."

"Then get up there and hand those books down to me. Nobody loafs in this office to-day."

"Well, doggone, if that isn't the limit! All right. Don't get mad. I'll do it." The young gentleman leisurely ascended to the top of the stepladder and fell into line under the lash.

"Young Mr. Graydon Bansemer will be here this afternoon," said Droom. "I want to get things cleaned up a bit beforehand."

"How does he feel about his father?"

"He doesn't know about him, I'm afraid."

"Gee! Well, it'll jar him a bit, won't it?"

The office door was opened suddenly and a tall young man strode into the room, only to stop aghast at the sight before him. Droom's lank figure swayed uncertainly and his eyes wavered.

"What's all this?" cried Graydon, dropping his bag and coming toward the old man, his hand outstretched. Droom's clammy fingers rested lifelessly in the warm clasp.

"How are you, Graydon? I'm—I'm very glad to see you. You are looking well. Oh, this? We—we are moving," said the old man. The helpers looked on with interest. "Come into the back office. It isn't so torn up. I didn't expect you so soon. They said it was twenty-four hours late. Well, well, how are you, my boy?"

"I'm quite well again, Elias. Hard siege of it, I tell you. Moving, eh? What's that for?"

"Never mind those books, Eddie. Thank you for helping me. Come in some other time. You fellows—I mean you—pack the rest of these and then I'll tell you what to do next. Come in, Graydon."

Eddie Deever took his departure, deeply insulted because he had not been introduced to the newcomer. Graydon, somewhat bewildered, followed Droom into his father's consultation room. He looked around inquiringly.

"Where is father? I telegraphed to him."

An incomprehensible grin came into Droom's face. He twirled the umbrella in his fingers a moment before replying. His glance at the closed door was no more significant than his lowered tones.

"It didn't go very well with him, Graydon. He isn't here any more."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the trial. There was a trial, you see. Haven't you heard anything?"

"Trial? He—he was arrested?" came numbly from the young man's lips.

"I can't mince matters, Graydon. I'll get it over as quickly as possible. Your father was tried for blackmail and was convicted. He is in—he's in the penitentiary."

The son's face became absolutely bloodless; his eyes were full of comprehension and horror, and his body stiffened as if he were turning to stone. The word penitentiary fell slowly, mechanically from his lips. He looked into Droom's eyes, hoping it might be a joke of the calloused old clerk.

"You—it—it can't be true," he murmured, his trembling hands going to his temples.

"Yes, my boy, it is true. I didn't write to you about it, because I wanted to put it off as long as I could. It's for five years."

"God!" burst from the wretched son. A wave of shame and grief sent the tears flooding to his eyes. "Poor old dad!" He turned and walked to the window, his shoulders heaving. Droom stood silent for a long time, watching Bansemer's son, pity and triumph in his face.

"Do you want to hear about it?" he asked at last. Graydon's head was bent in assent.

"It came the day after you left Chicago with the

recruits. I knew you would not read the newspapers. So did he. Harbert swore out the papers and he was arrested here in this office. I believe he would have killed himself if he had been given time. His revolver was—er—not loaded. Before the officers came he discharged me. I was at liberty to go or to testify against him. I did neither. Of course, I was arrested, but they could only prove that I was a clerk who knew absolutely nothing about the inside workings of the office. I offered to go on his bond but he would not have me. He made some arrangement, through his attorney, and bail was secured. In spite of the fact that he was charged with crime, he insisted on keeping these offices and trying to do business. It wasn't because he needed money, Graydon, but because he wanted to lead an honest life, he said. He has a great deal of money, let me tell you. The grand jury indicted him last spring but the trial did not come up until last month—nearly a year later—so swift is justice in this city. In the meantime, I saw but little of him. I was working on an invention and, besides, there were detectives watching every movement I made. I stuck close to my rooms. By the way, I want to show you a couple of models I have perfected. Don't let me forget it. They——"

"Yes, yes—but father? Go on!"

"Well, the trial came up at last. That man Harbert is a devil. He had twenty witnesses, any one of whom could have convicted your father. How he got onto them, I can't imagine. He uncovered every deal we've—er—he had in Chicago and——"

"Then he really was guilty!" groaned Graydon.

"Yes, my boy, I knew it, of course. They could not force me to testify against him, however. I was too smart for them. Well, to make it short, he was sentenced five weeks ago. The motion for a new trial was overruled. He went to Joliet. If he had been a popular alderman or ward boss he would have been out yet on continuances, spending most of his sentence in some fasionable hotel, to say the least."

"Is he—wearing stripes?"

"Yes, it's the fashion there."

"For God's sake, don't jest. For five years!" The young man sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"There'll be something off for good behaviour, my boy. He wanted to behave well before he went there, so I suppose he'll keep it up. The whole town was against him. He didn't have a friend."

"How did you escape?" demanded Graydon, looking up suddenly. "State's evidence?"

"No, not even after he tried to put most of the blame upon me. He tried that, my boy. I just let him talk. It saved me from prison. Usually the case with the man who keeps his mouth closed."

"But, Elias—Elias, why have I been kept in the dark? Why did he not tell me about it? Why has——"

"You forget, Graydon, that you turned from him first. You were really the first to condemn him. He wanted you to stay away from this country until he is free. That was his plan. He didn't want to see you. Now he wants you to come to him. He wants you to bring Jane Cable to see him."

"What!"

"Yes, that's it. I believe he intends to tell her the names of her father and mother. I think he wants her to forgive him and he wants to hear both of you say it to him."

Graydon stared blankly from the window. The old clerk was smiling to himself, an evil, gloating smile that would have shocked Bansemer had he turned suddenly.

"He wants both of us to—to come to the penitentiary?" muttered the son.

"Yes, as soon as possible. Do you think she'll go?" demanded Droom anxiously.

"I don't know. I'm afraid not."

"Not even to learn who her parents are?"

"It might tempt her. But she hates father."

"Well, she can gloat over him, can't she? That ought to be some satisfaction. Talk it over with her. She's here, isn't she?"

"Elias, do you know who her parents were?" asked Graydon quickly. "I've thought you knew as much about it as father."

The old man's eyes shifted.

"It's a silly question to ask of me. I was not a member of the Four Hundred, my boy."

"Nor was my father. Yet you think he knows."

"He's a much smarter man than I, Graydon. You'll go with me to see him?"

"Yes. I can't speak for Miss Cable."

"See her to-morrow. Come out to my place to-night, where the reporters can't find you. Maybe you won't

care to sleep with me—I've but one bed, you see—but you can go to a quiet hotel downtown. I'm packing these things to store them for your father. Then I'm going back to New York to live on my income. It's honest money, too."

"Who sent me the draft for five hundred?"

"I did, Graydon. Forgive me. It was just a loan, you know. I thought you'd need something——"

"I haven't touched it, Elias. Here it is. Thank you. No, I won't accept it."

"I'm sorry," muttered the old man, taking the slip of paper.

Graydon resumed his seat near the window and watched Droom with leaden eyes as he turned suddenly to resume charge of the packing. "We'll soon be through," he said shortly.

For an hour the work went on, and then Droom dismissed the workers with their pay. The storage van men were there to carry the boxes away. Graydon sat still and saw the offices divested. Secondhand dealers hurried off with the furniture, the pictures and the rugs; an expressman came in for the things that belonged to Elias Droom.

"There," said the clerk, tossing the umbrella into a corner. "It's finished. There's nothing left to do but remove ourselves."

"Elias, did Mr. Clegg know about father's conviction when he offered me the place in New York?" asked Graydon as they started away.

"Yes, that's the beauty of it. He admires you. You'll take the place?"

"Not until I've talked it all over with him—to-morrow."

Droom called a cab and the two drove over to the Wells Street rooms, Graydon relinquishing himself completely to the will of the old man. During the supper, which Droom prepared with elaborate care, and far into the night, the young man sat and listened without interest to the garrulous talk of his host, who explained the mechanism and purpose of two models.

One was in the nature of a guillotine by which a person could chop his own head off neatly without chance of failure, and the other had to do with the improvement of science in respect to shoelaces.

CHAPTER XXX

THE DRINK OF GALL

Mr. Clegg was not long in convincing Graydon that his proposition to him was sincere and not the outgrowth of sentiment. A dozen men in the office greeted Graydon with a warmth that had an uplifting effect. He went away with a heart lighter than he had once imagined it could ever be again. In two weeks he was to be in absolute control of the New York branch; he assured the firm that his physical condition was such that he could go to work at once, if necessary.

As he hastened to the Annex, misgivings again entered into his soul. The newspapers had heralded his return and had hinted broadly at romantic developments in connection with Miss Cable, "who is at the Annex with Mr. and Mrs. Cable." There were brief references to the causes which sent both of them to the Philippines, and that was all.

Without hesitation, he came to the point by asking if she knew what had befallen his father. Jane had heard the news the night before. He thereupon put the whole situation before her just as it had been suggested in Droom's ironical remark. It was not until after the question had been passed upon by Mr. and Mrs. Cable that she reluctantly consented to visit Graydon's father—solely for the purpose of gleaning what information she could regarding her parentage.

They left the next day with Elias Droom, depressed, nervous, dreading the hour ahead of them. Neither was in the mood to respond to the eager, excited remarks of the old clerk. The short railroad trip was one never to be forgotten; impressions were left in their lives that could not be effaced.

James Bansemer, shorn and striped, was not expecting visitors. He was surprised and angry when he was told that visitors were waiting to see him. For four weeks he had laboured clumsily and sourly in the shoe factory of the great prison, a hauler and carrier. His tall figure was bent with unusual toil, his hands were sore and his heart was full of the canker of rebellion. Already, in that short time, his face had taken on the look of the convict. All the viciousness in his nature had gone to his face and settled there. He had the sullen, dogged, patient look of the man who has a number but no name.

The once dignified, aggressive walk had degenerated into a slouch; he shuffled as he came to the bars where he was to meet his first visitors. He was not pleased but he was curious. Down in his heart he found a hope that his attorney had come with good news. It was not until he was almost face to face with his son that he realised who it was; not until then that he felt the full force of shame, ignominy, loathing for himself.

He started back with an involuntary oath and would have slunk away had not Graydon called out to him—called out in a voice full of pain and misery. The convict's face was ashen and his jaw hung loose with the paralysis of dismay; his heart dropped like a chunk

of ice, his feet were as leaden weights. A look of utter despair came into his hard eyes as he slowly advanced to the bars.

"My God, Graydon, why did you come? Why did you come here?" he muttered. Then he caught sight of Jane and Elias Droom. His eyes dropped and his fingers twitched; to save his life he could not have kept his lower lip from trembling nor the burning tears from his eyes. His humiliation was complete.

A malevolent grin was on Droom's face; his staring blue eyes looked with a great joy upon the shamed, beaten man in the stripes. The one thing that he had longed for and cherished had come to pass; he had lived to see James Bansemer utterly destroyed even in his own eyes.

"Father, I can't believe it. I can't tell you how it hurts me. I would willingly take your place if it were possible. Forgive me for deserting you——" Graydon was saying incoherently when his father lifted his face suddenly, a fierce, horrified look of understanding in the eyes that flashed upon Elias Droom. Even as he clasped his son's hand in the bitterness of small joy, his lips curled into a snarl of fury. Droom's eyes shifted instantly, his uneasy gaze directing itself as usual above the head of its victim.

"You did this, curse you!" came from the convict's livid lips. "And this girl, too! Good God, you knew I would rather have died than to meet Graydon as I am now. You knew it and you brought him here. I hope you will rot in hell for this, Elias Droom. She comes here, too, to gloat—to rejoice—to see how I

look before my son in prison stripes!" He went on violently for a long stretch, ending with a sob of rage. "I suppose you are satisfied," he said hoarsely to Droom.

Graydon and Jane looked on in surprise and distress. Droom's gaze did not swerve nor his expression change.

"Father, didn't you expect me to come?" asked Graydon. "Don't you want to see me?"

"Not here. Why should I have tried to keep you from returning to this country? God knows how I hoped and prayed that you'd not see me here. Elias Droom knew it. That's why he brought you here. Don't lie to me, Droom. I know it!"

"What could you expect?" mumbled Droom. "Down in your heart you wanted to see him. I've done you a kindness."

"For which I'll repay you some day," cried the prisoner, a steady look in his eyes. "Now go away, all of you! I'm through with you. You've seen me. The girl is satisfied. Go——"

"Nonsense, father," cried Graydon, visibly distressed by his father's anguish. "Elias said that you wanted to see us. Jane did not come out of curiosity. She is here to ask justice of you; she's not seeking vengeance."

"I'll talk to you alone," said the prisoner shortly. "Send her away. I've nothing to say to her or Droom."

Jane turned and walked swiftly away, followed by Droom, who rubbed his long fingers together and tried to look sympathetic. The interview that ensued be-

tween father and son was never to be forgotten by either. Graydon heard his father's bitter story in awed silence; heard him curse deeply and vindictively; heard all this and marvelled at the new and heretofore unexposed side of his nature.

There was something pathetic in the haggard face and the expressions of impotent rage. His heart softened when his father bared his shame to him and cried out against the fate which had brought them together on this day.

"It doesn't matter, father," said Graydon hoarsely. "I deserted you and I'm sorry. No matter what you've done to bring you here, I'm glad I've come to see you. I don't blame Elias. For a while I'm afraid I rather held out against coming. Now, I am glad for my own sake. I won't desert you now. I am going to work for a pardon, if your appeal does not go through."

"Don't! I won't have it!" exclaimed the other. "I'm going to stay it out. It will give me time to forget, so that I can be a better man. If they let me out now I'd do something I'd always regret. I want to serve my time and start all over again. Don't worry about me. I won't hamper you. I'll go away—abroad, as Harbert suggested. Damn him, his advice was good, after all. Understand, Graydon, I do not want parole or pardon. You must not undertake it. I am guilty and I ought to be punished the same as these other fellows in here. Don't shudder. It's true. I'm no better than they."

"I hate to think of you in this awful place——" began Graydon.

"Don't think of me."

"But, my God, I've seen you here, father," cried the son.

"A pretty spectacle for a son," laughed the father bitterly. "Why did you bring that girl here? That was cruel—heartless."

Graydon tried to convince him that Jane had not come to gloat but to ask a favour of him.

"A favour, eh? She expects me to tell all I know about her, eh? That's good!" laughed Bansemer.

"Father, she has done you no wrong. Why are you so bitter against her? It's not right—it's not like you."

Bansemer looked steadily at him for a full minute.

"Is she going to marry you, Graydon?"

"She refuses, absolutely."

"Then, she's better than I thought. Perhaps I'm wrong in hating her as I do. It's because she took you away from me. Give me time, Graydon. Some day I may tell you all I know. Don't urge me now; I can't do it now. I don't want to see her again. Don't think I'm a fool about it, boy, and don't speak of it again. Give me time."

"She is the gentlest woman in the world."

"You love her?"

"Better than my life."

"Graydon, I—I hope she will change her mind and become your wife."

"You do? I don't understand."

"That's why I'd rather she never could know who her parents are. The shadow is invisible now; it

wouldn't help matters for her if it were visible. She's better off by not knowing. Has Droom intimated that he knows?"

"He says he does not."

"He lies, but at the same time he won't tell her. It's not in him to do it. God, he has served me ill to-day. He has always hated me, but he was always true to me. He did me a vile trick when he changed the cartridges in my revolver. By God, I discharged him for that. I told him to appear against me if he would. He was free to do so. But, curse him, he would not give me the satisfaction of knowing that he was a traitor. He knew I'd go over the road, anyhow. He's been waiting for this day to come. He has finally given me the unhappiest hour in my life."

After a few moments he quieted down and asked Graydon what his plans were for the future. In a strained uncertain way the two talked of the young man's prospects and the advantages they promised.

"Go ahead, Graydon, and don't let the shadow of your father haunt you. Don't forget me, boy, because I love you better than all the world. These are strange words for a man who has fallen as I have fallen, but they are true. Listen to this: you will be a rich man some day; I have a fortune to give you, my boy. They can't take my money from me, you know. It's all to be yours—every cent of it. You see——"

"Father—I—let us not talk about it now," said Graydon hastily, a shadow of repugnance in his eyes. Bansemer studied his face for a moment and a deep red mounted to his brow.

"You mean, Graydon," he stammered, "that you—you do not want my money?"

"Why should we talk about it now?"

"Because it suggests my death?"

"No, no, father. I——"

"You need not say it. I understand. It's enough. You feel that my money was not honestly made. Well, we won't discuss it. I'll not offer it to you again."

"It won't make any difference, dad. I love you. I don't love your money."

"Or the way I earned it. Some day, my boy, you'll learn that very few make money by dealing squarely with their fellow men. It's not the custom. My methods were a little broader than common, that's all. I now notify you that I intend to leave all I have to sweet charity. I earned most of my ill-gotten wealth in New York and Chicago, and I'm going to give it back to these cities. Charity will take anything that is offered, but it doesn't always give in return."

At the expiration of the time allotted to the visitor, Graydon took his departure.

"Graydon, ask her to think kindly of me if she can."

"I'll come down again, father before I go East."

"No!" almost shouted James Bansemer. "I won't have it! For my sake, Graydon, don't ever come here again. Don't shame me more than you have to-day. I'll never forget this hour. Stay away and you'll be doing me the greatest kindness in the world. Promise me, boy!"

"I can't promise that, dad. It isn't a sane request. I am your son——"

"My God, boy, don't you see that I can't bear to look at you through these bars? Go! Please go! Good-bye! Write to me, but don't come here again. Don't! It's only a few years."

He turned away abruptly, his shoulder drawn upward as if in pain, and Graydon left the place, weakened and sick at heart.

Jane and Droom were awaiting him in an outer office. The former looked into his eyes searchingly, tenderly.

"I'm so sorry, Graydon," she said as she took his hand in hers.

All the way back to Chicago Elias Droom sat and watched them from under lowered brows, wondering why it was that he felt so much lonelier than he ever had felt before,—wondering, too, in a vague sort of way, why he was not able to exult, after all.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE TRANSFORMING OF DROOM

Jane was ill and did not leave her room during the two days following the visit to the penitentiary. She was haunted by the face of James Bansemer, the convict. It was beyond her powers of imagination to recall him as the well-groomed, distinguished man she once had known. Graydon was deeply distressed over the pain and humiliation he had subjected her to through Droom's unfortunate efforts. The fact that she could not or would not see him for two days hurt him more than he could express, even to himself. The day before he left for New York, however, she saw him in their parlour. She was pale and very quiet.

Neither mentioned the visit to the prison; there was nothing to say.

"You will be in New York next week?" he asked as he arose to leave. His spirit was sore. She again had told him that he must not hope. With an hysterical attempt to lead him on to other topics, she repeated her conversations with Teresa Valesquez, urging him with a hopeless attempt at bravado, to seek out the Spanish girl and marry her. He laughed lifelessly at the jest.

"We will leave Chicago on Monday. Father will have his business affairs arranged by that time. I would not let him resign the presidency. It would seem as if I were taking it away from him. We expect to be in Europe for six or eight months. Then, I am coming

back to New York, where I was born, Graydon—to work!"

He went away with the feeling in his heart that he was not to see her again. A single atom of determination lingered in his soul, however, and he tried to build upon it for the future. Rigby's wedding invitation had come to him that morning—almost as a mockery. He tore it to pieces with a scowl of recollection.

Droom's effects were on the way to New York. He hung back, humbly waiting for Graydon to suggest that they should travel East on the same train. His grim, friendless old heart gave a bound of pure joy—the first he had known—when the young man made the suggestion that night.

Together they travelled eastward and homeward, leaving behind them the grey man in stripes.

Jane's six months in Europe grew into a year—and longer. It was a long but a profitable year for Graydon Bansemer; he had been enriched not only in wealth but in the hope of ultimate happiness. Not that Jane encouraged him. Far from it, she was more obdurate than ever with an ocean between them. But his atom of determination had grown to a purpose. His face was thinner and his eyes were of a deeper, more wistful grey; they were full of longing for the girl across the sea, and of pity and yearning for the man back there in the West.

He had toiled hard and well; he had won. The shadow of '99 was still over him, but the year and a new ambition had lessened its blackness. Friends were legion

in the great metropolis; he won his way into the hearts and confidence of new associates and renewed fellowship with the old. Invitations came thickly upon him, but he resolutely turned his back upon most of them. He was not socially hungry in these days.

Once a week he wrote to his father, but there never was a reply. He did not expect one, for James Bansemer, in asking him to write, had vowed that his son should never hear from him again until he could speak as a free man and a chastened one. True to his promise, Graydon instituted no movement to secure a pardon. He did, by a strong personal appeal, persuade Denis Harbert to drop further prosecution. There were enough indictments against his father to have kept him behind the bars for life.

Elias Droom had rooms in Eighth Avenue not a great distance from Herald Square. He was quite proud of his new quarters. They had many of the unpleasant features of the old ones in Wells Street, but they were less garish in their affront to an æsthetic eye. The incongruous pictures were there and the oddly assorted books, but the new geraniums had a chance for life in the broader windows; the cook stove was in the rear and there was a venerable Chinaman in charge of it; the bedroom was kept so neat and clean that Droom quite feared to upset it with his person. But, most strange of all, was the change in Droom himself.

"I've retired from active work," he informed Graydon one day, when that young man stared in astonishment at him. "What's the use, my boy, in Elias Droom dressing like a dog of a workingman, when he is a

gentleman of leisure and affluence? It surprises you to see me in an evening suit, eh? Well, by Jove, my boy, I've got a dinner jacket, a Prince Albert and a silk hat. There are four new suits of clothes hanging up in that closet," he said, adding, with a sarcastic laugh, "That ought to make a perfect gentleman of me, oughtn't it? What are you laughing at?"

"I can't help it, Elias. Who would have dreamed that you'd go in for good clothes!"

"I used to dream about it, long ago. I swore if I ever got back to New York I'd dress as New Yorkers dress—even if I was a hundred years old. I've got a servant, too. What d'ye think of that? He can't understand a word I say, nor can I understand him. That's why he stays on with me. He doesn't know when I'm discharging him, and I don't know when he's threatening to leave. What do you think of my rooms?"

It was Graydon's first visit to the place, weeks after their return to New York. He had not felt friendly to Droom since the day at the prison; but now he was forgetting his resentment, in the determination to wrest from him the names of Jane's father and mother. He was confident that the old man knew.

"Better than Wells Street, eh? Well, you see, I was in trade then. Different now. I'm getting to be quite a fop. Do you notice that I say 'By Jove' occasionally?" He gave his raucous laugh of derision. "Dined at Sherry's the other night, old chap," he went on with raw mimicry. "They thought I was a Christian and let me in. I used to look like the devil, you know."

"By the Lord Harry, Elias," cried Graydon, "you look like the devil now."

"I've got these carpet slippers on because my shoes hurt my feet," explained Droom sourly. "My collar rubbed my neck, so I took it off. Otherwise, I'm just as I was when I got in at Sherry's. Funny what a difference a little thing like a collar makes, isn't it?"

"I should say so. I never gave it a thought until now. But, Elias, I want to ask a great favour of you. You can——"

"My boy, if your father wouldn't tell you who her parents are, don't expect me to do so. He knows; I only suspect."

"You must be a mind reader," gasped Graydon.

"It isn't hard to read your mind these days. What do you hear from her?" Graydon went back to the subject after a few moments. "I am morally certain that I know who her father and mother were, but it won't do any good to tell her. It didn't make me any better to learn who my father was. It made me wiser, that's all. How's your father?"

After this night Graydon saw the old man often. They dined together occasionally in the small cafés on the West Side. Droom could not, for some reason known only to himself, be induced to go to Sherry's again.

"When Jane comes back, I'll give you both a quiet little supper there after the play maybe. It'll be my treat, my boy."

The old man worked patiently and fruitlessly over his "inventions." They came to naught, but they lightened his otherwise barren existence. There was

not a day or night in which his mind was wholly free from thoughts of James Bansemer.

He counted the weeks and days until the man would be free, and his eyes narrowed with these furtive glances into the future. He felt in his heart that James Bansemer would come to him at once, and that the reckoning for his single hour of triumph would be a heavy one to pay. Sometimes he would sit for hours with his eyes staring at the Napoleon above the bookcase, something like dread in their depths. Then again he would laugh with glee, pound the table with his bony hand—much to the consternation of Chang—and exclaim as if addressing a multitude:

"I hope I'll be dead when he gets out of there! I hope I won't live to see him free again. That would spoil everything. Let me see, I'm seventy-one now; I surely can't live much longer. I want to die seeing him as I saw him that day. The last thing I think of on earth must be James Bansemer's face behind the bars. Ha, ha, ha! It was worth all the years, that one hour! It was even worth while being his slave. I'm not afraid of him! No! That's ridiculous. Of course, I'm not afraid of him. I only want to know he's lying in a cell when I die out here in the great, free world! By my soul, he'll know that a handsome face isn't always the best. He laughed at my face, curse him. His face won her—his good looks! Well, well, well, I only hope she's where she can see his face now!"

He would work himself into a frenzy of torment and glee combined, usually collapsing at the end of his harangue. It disgusted him to think that his health

was so good that he might be expected to live beyond the limit of James Bansemer's imprisonment.

At the end of eighteen months, Jane was coming home. She had written to Graydon from London, and the newspapers announced the sailing of the Cables on one of the White Star steamers.

"I am coming home to end all of this idleness," she wrote to him. "I mean to find pleasure in toil, in doing good, in lifting the burdens of those who are helpless. You will see how I can work, Graydon. You will love me more than ever when you see how I can do so much good for my fellow creatures. I want you to love me more and more, because I shall love you to the end of my life."

The night before the ship was to arrive Graydon was dining with the Jack Percivals. There were a dozen in the party—a blasé, bored collection of human beings who had dined out so incessantly that eating was a punishment. They had come to look upon food as a foe to comfort and a grievous obstacle in the path of pleasure. Bridge was just beginning to take hold of them; its grip was tightening with new coils as each night went by. Nobody thought of dinner; the thought was of the delay in getting at the game; an instinct that was not even a thought urged them to abhor the food that had come into their lives so abundantly.

Night after night they dined out; night after night they toyed with their forks, ate nothing, drank to hide their yawns, took black coffee and said they enjoyed the food tremendously.

Graydon Bansemer was new to this attitude. He was

vigorous and he was not surfeited with food; he had an appetite. Just before six o'clock his host called him up by 'phone, and, in a most genial way, advised him to eat a hearty meal before coming up to dinner. Graydon made the mistake of not following this surprising bit of advice.

He sat next to Mrs. Percival. She appeared agitated and uncertain. Servants came in with the dishes and almost immediately took them away again. No one touched a mouthful of the food; no one except Graydon noticed the celerity with which the plates and their contents were removed; no one felt that he was expected to eat. Graydon, after his first attempt to really eat of the third course, subsided with a look of amazement at his hostess. She smiled and whispered something into his ear. He grew very red and choked with—was it confusion or mirth?

Everybody gulped black coffee and everybody puffed violently at cigars and cigarettes and then everybody bolted for the card tables.

Jack Percival grasped Graydon's arm and drew him back into the dining-room. He was grinning like an ape.

"It worked, by George—worked like a charm. Great Scott, what a money and time saver! I was a little worried about you, Bansemer, but I knew the others wouldn't catch on. Great, wasn't it?"

"What the dickens does it mean?" demanded Graydon. "Mean! Why, good Lord, man, nobody ever eats at these damned dinners. They *can't* eat. They're sick of dinners. That crowd out there takes tea and things

at five or six o'clock. They wouldn't any more think of eating anything at a dinner after the caviar and oysters than you'd think of flying. It's a waste of time and money to give 'em real food. This is the second time I've tried my scheme and it's worked both times. I can serve this same dinner twenty times. Everything's made of wax and papier mache. See what I mean? And I'll leave it to you that there isn't a soul out there who is any the wiser. By George, it's a great invention. I'm going to patent it. Come on; let's get in there. They're howling for us to begin."

Graydon, his mind full of Jane, played at a table with Colonel Sedgwick, a blasé old Knickerbocker whose sole occupation in life was saying rude things about other people. To-night he was particularly attentive to his profession. He kept Graydon and the two women sitting straight and uncomfortable in their chairs between hands and positively chilled while the game went on.

Graydon's game was a poor one at best, but he was playing abominably on this occasion. He could not tear his thoughts from the ship that was drawing nearer and nearer to New York harbour with each succeeding minute. In his mind's eye he could look far out over the black waters and see the lonely vessel as it rushed on through the night. He wondered if Jane were asleep or awake and thinking of him.

The Colonel's irascibility finally drove him from the game. He apologised for his wretched playing, but the Colonel did not apologise for the disagreeable things he had said.

It was one o'clock when Graydon reached his rooms. There he found a note from Elias Droom.

"I have an especial reason," he wrote, "for asking you and Miss Cable to dine with me on Monday night. We will go to Sherry's. Let me know as soon as you have seen her."

CHAPTER XXXII

ELIAS DROOM'S DINNER PARTY

He was mystified and not a little upset by this almost peremptory summons from the old man. He hurried over to Droom's quarters the next morning, after ascertaining that the steamer would not reach the dock until two or three o'clock. Droom was at work on one of his amazing models.

"Hello," he said ungraciously. "I thought I invited you for to-night."

"I want to know something about it, Elias," said Graydon, sitting upon the end of the workbench. "She'll not get in before the middle of the afternoon, and she may not feel like going to Sherry's to-night."

"Just as she likes," said Droom pettishly. "You mean that she would not like to be seen there with me unless there is to be something in it for her, eh?"

"Nonsense. You've got something on your mind, Elias. What is it? Why do you insist on going to-night?"

"I don't. It's to-night or not at all, however. I'm not in the habit of letting people decide when I shall dine at Sherry's. If she doesn't want to come, let her say so." That was all Graydon could get out of him, so he left in a more perplexed frame of mind than before.

He was at the dock long before the steamer came to a stop after its eight days of ceaseless throbbing. She was waving to him from the rail, her face beaming with happiness. It was just as he had seen it in his dreams of this day. More than ever he arrayed his love against her principle; more than ever was he determined to overcome the obstacles which she had thrown up in her self-arraignment.

There was a cold, biting wind blowing, with the suggestion of snow in the skies. The passengers came down with rosy cheeks, coloured by the frost-laden hours on deck. After the tedious, disagreeable hour with the customs officials, the Cables were driven to the Holland House. Graydon Bansemer, sitting opposite to Jane in the carriage, was almost speechless with joy and eagerness. The old restraint was still upon him, but it was being worn down by degrees as he gathered encouragement from the clear, inviting eyes of the girl he worshipped. The love in those happy, glowing eyes could not be mistaken for loyal indifference.

She was more beautiful than ever to his hungry, patient eyes; she was more desirable, more priceless. David Cable and his wife had been immensely benefited in every way by their months abroad. Jane had found the sunshine for them and it had been her purpose in all these months to keep them free from the shadows. They had travelled Europe over and they had lived in the full warmth of pleasure.

Cable took Graydon aside as they entered the hotel. The latter had implored Jane to give him a few minutes alone at the earliest possible moment.

"Tell me about your father, Graydon," said David Cable.

"He is still in—in Joliet," replied the young man quietly.

"He has not offered to help us in clearing up the mystery?"

"I have had no word from him, Mr. Cable. He seems to be in his tomb. I am afraid he will not help us, sir. He has said he would not; that means a great deal, I am sorry to say."

He then told him of Elias Droom's strange invitation, adding that he believed the old man was ready to reveal all that he knew.

"She must go with you to-night, then," said Cable. "It is necessary. She wants to know the truth. She has said so."

"It won't matter, sir, so far as I am concerned. She——"

"She has come back, my boy, determined to go on with her plans. I am sorry, Graydon, but I am at last convinced that she means to give her life to the work."

"By Heaven, Mr. Cable, she shall not do it! I can't live without her," cried Graydon miserably. Cable smiled sadly as he shook his head.

At half past seven o'clock Jane Cable and Graydon met Droom at Sherry's. She was paler than usual and there was a queer chill in her heart. Bansemer was more nervous than he had ever been before in his life.

Elias Droom, the strangest creature in the big restaur-

ant, arose to greet them as they entered the doors. He had been waiting inside and out for half an hour, and his welcome was quite in keeping with his character. He uttered a few gruff words of greeting to her, accompanied by a perfunctory smile that gave out no warmth; then he started off with rude haste toward the table he had reserved. Not a word concerning her welfare, her health, her return to the homeland—no sign of interest or consideration. They followed him silently, anxiously.

The old man was conspicuously repulsive in his finery. It is unnecessary to say that his clothes did not fit his lank figure: tailors cannot perform miracles. His long chin was carefully shaven, but the razor could not remove the ruts and creases that hid the thick stubble of grey and black. Not one but one hundred diners looked with curiosity upon the nervous, uncouth old man. There was a buzz of interest and a craning of necks when the crowd saw the handsome couple join him at the table in the corner.

"I wish you'd order the dinner for me, Graydon," he said, rather plaintively. "I can pay for it, Miss Cable," he added with an attempt at joviality, "but I'm no good at ordering. These young swells know all about it. Get champagne, Graydon. Order something nice for Miss Cable. Anywhere up to twenty dollars. I'm not a millionaire, Miss Cable. Tell the waiter I'll pay for it, Graydon. This is a swell place, isn't it, Miss Cable? I've never been in Europe, but they say they can't touch our restaurants over there. Get oysters, Graydon."

"By Jove, Elias, you are giving us a treat," laughed Graydon. The old man's mood had changed suddenly. He was beaming in his effort to be agreeable. A glance around the room had convinced him that the prettiest woman there was sitting at his table. He felt a new sense of pride.

"I am proud of myself," said Droom—and he meant it.

"It's very good of you to ask me to come, Mr. Droom," said Jane, her bright eyes meeting his before they could lift themselves into the customary stare above her head.

"I'm not so sure about that," said Elias. From time to time he glanced uneasily toward a table at his left. It was set for six persons, none of whom had arrived. "I trust it will not be the last time you will honour me, Miss Cable. I am getting very hospitable in my old age. If you don't mind, Graydon, I won't drink this cocktail. I may take the champagne. I'm quite a teetotaler, you see. Milk, always. By the way, Graydon," he said, turning suddenly to the young man, "I suppose you've led her to believe that I had a motive in asking her to dine to-night—I mean other than the pleasure it would give to me."

"I—I rather thought something of the sort," stammered Graydon.

"Well, there is a motive. I've decided at last to tell all I knew. Don't look like that, Miss Cable. You'll attract attention. Calm yourself. It will be some time before the story is forthcoming. Besides, I doubt very much whether you'll get any great satisfaction out of

it, although it may clear things up a bit for you. If you've been hoping that your father and mother—well, we'll take our time. Here are the oysters. Oysters make me think of your father, Graydon. Don't choke, my boy," he chuckled as Graydon stiffened quickly. "He had a woman arrested at her own dinner party one night—right over there in Fifth Avenue, too. Search warrant, and all that. The oysters were being served when the papers were served. Ah, he was a great man for effective revenge. She had dared him, you see. Did you ever hear of the other time when he permitted an ignorant host to invite two deadly enemies to the same dinner? One fellow had robbed the other fellow of his wife. Terrible scandal. Your father knew that they expected to kill one another on sight. And yet when the host told him whom he expected to invite he let him ask the two men. He told me about it afterward. It amused him. Everybody but the host knew of the row and there was a panic in the drawing-room."

"Good Lord," gasped Graydon, helplessly pushing the oysters away. "Why are you telling me this?"

"Oh, it was a great joke. It's a good dinner story. The joke comes in at the end. Both those fellows got tight and went home with their arms about one another. By the way, Graydon, what do you hear from your father?"

Graydon looked uncomfortably at Jane, whose face was set with distress.

"Elias, you've got no right to——" began the young man coldly.

"I beg your pardon if I've offended," said Droom abjectly. "I—I don't know the etiquette of small talk—forgive me. I was interested, that is all."

"It may interest you to know that I had a long talk with Mr. Clegg this afternoon. He says there is a movement on foot to secure a pardon for father. Father hasn't asked anyone to intercede. It is known that he will go to England to live as soon as he is released. That's an inducement, you see," he said bitterly.

Droom's face turned a frozen white; his steely eyes took on a peculiar glaze, and his hand grasped his leg as if it were a vise intended to hold him in his chair.

"I haven't told you about it, Jane," went on Graydon. "Mr. Clegg has seen father and he says he is indifferent about it. He intends to leave the country in any event. I am going to write to him to-night, asking him to let them apply for the pardon. It may save him from three years more of servitude. Mr. Clegg is sure he can get his release—what's the matter, Elias?"

The old clerk's body had stiffened and the look in his face was something horrible to behold. Terror was visible in every lineament. His companions started from their chairs in alarm. With a mighty effort the old man succeeded in regaining a semblance of self-control. His body relaxed, and his jaw dropped; his voice was trembling and weak as he responded, an apologetic grin on his face.

"Nothing—nothing at all. A momentary pain. Don't mind me. Don't mind me," he mumbled. "I have them often. I think it's my heart. What were you saying,

Graydon? Oh, yes, the pardon. I—I hope you'll mention me in writing to your father. Tell him I hope to—to see him if he comes to New York."

"I don't believe he likes you, Elias," said Graydon, half jestingly.

"Wha—what has he said to you?" demanded Droom sharply.

"He rather resented your taking Jane and me to Joliet that day." The old man's grin was malicious. "He won't forgive you that."

"I shall never forget how he looked at you, Mr. Droom," said Jane with a shudder. Droom trembled with a new spasm of fear.

Attention was diverted by the arrival of the party of six. The men were distinguished in appearance, the women aristocratic but spirited. That they were well known to many of the diners in those days at Sherry's was at once apparent; they were bowing right and left to near-by acquaintances. After much ado they finally relapsed into the chairs obsequiously drawn back for them and the buzz of conversation throughout the place was resumed.

Graydon, lowering his voice, named the newcomers to Jane, who looked at them with fresh interest. The names were well known to New York and European society. For the moment Elias Droom was unnoticed. He took the opportunity to collect his nerves and to subdue his too apparent emotion. Jane was recalled from her polite scrutiny of the women at the next table by hearing her name mentioned in Droom's hoarsest voice, modified into something like a whisper.

"Miss Cable, I not only asked you to come here in order to tell you the name of your father, but to point him out to you."

There was an instant of breathless silence at the table. So startling was his announcement that every other sound in the room escaped the ears of his two listeners.

"There was a new hundred dollar bill found in the basket with you. Your grandfather's signature was on that bill. He was the president of the bank which issued it. Your mother was——" Here he leaned forward and whispered a name that fairly stunned his hearers. Graydon caught his breath and a new light appeared in his eyes. He was beginning to believe that the old man's brain was affected. Jane leaned forward in her chair, an incredulous smile on her lips.

"Don't jest, Elias," began Graydon, somewhat roughly.

"I am not jesting. It is the truth, I swear it," snapped Elias.

"But, great Heaven, man, consider what you've said. It's one of the best families in this country—it's preposterous to say——"

"Of course, her family is one of the best. She was a blue stocking. That's where Miss Cable gets most of her good blood."

"My God, Elias, I can't believe it!" cried Graydon.

Jane was staring blankly at the old man's face.

"Your father will tell you the same. For more than twenty years I have known the secret. There is no documentary proof, but this much I do know: James

Bansemer received fifty thousand dollars for keeping his mouth closed. He found out the truth and he profited by it as usual. Oh, he knew that hundred dollar bills are not left with pauper babes. I don't know how he unearthed the truth about Miss——"

"Sh! Don't mention the name aloud!"

"But he did unearth it, beyond all possible chance of mistake. Your father, Miss Cable, is sitting at that table. Don't look up just yet. He is staring at you. He doesn't know you, but he does know you are a pretty woman. The gentleman with the grey hair, Graydon. See? That man is her father."

Graydon half started up in his chair, his lips apart, his eyes riveted on the man designated. Every drop of blood seemed to have frozen in his veins.

"Good God, Elias!" he whispered. "Why, that is——" The name stuck in his throat.

"The son of the man who signed the banknote. He is Jane's father. There's blue blood in him—there has been since King Henry's day—but he is a villain for all that. Now, Miss Cable, I've done my duty. I've told you the absolute truth. You could not have expected more—you could not have asked a greater climax. The name of Vanderbilt or Astor is no better known than that man's name, and no ancestry is better than that of your mother. I will now give to you one of the articles of proof that connects you with their history." He handed to her a small package. "It is the letter written to James Bansemer by your paternal grandfather, agreeing to an appointment to discuss a question of grave moment. I found the letter that

same day, and I've kept it all these years. It bears your grandfather's signature. That is all. I heard part of that interview, and I stake my soul that what I've told you is true."

Jane sat looking at him as if paralysed. Her mind was quite incapable of grasping the full import of his words—the words she had craved for so many months, and yet dreaded.

"I knew he was coming here to-night. He gives a theatre party. To-morrow he goes abroad. That is all."

"He's living in Paris," muttered Graydon mechanically. Jane spoke for the first time, as in a daze.

"I—I have seen him many times in Paris. My father? Oh, oh, it can't be true."

"Jane, let me take you away from here——" began Graydon, observing her pallor.

"No. Let me stay. It can't matter, Graydon. I want to look at him again and again," she said, shrinking back as if the whole world were staring at her. By the most prodigious effort she regained control of her fleeing composure. It was a trying moment.

"He's worth millions," said Droom. "It will be worth while for *you* to——"

"No!" she exclaimed passionately. "Do you think I will present myself to him after he has cast me off! No! a thousand times, no!"

At that instant the party of six hurriedly arose to leave the place. The tall man with the grey hair—the handsomest man of all—was staring boldly at Jane's averted face, now red with consciousness. As he passed

"THE HANDSOMEST MAN OF ALL—WAS STARING BOLDLY AT JANE'S AVERTED FACE"

her in going out of the room, his look grew more insistent. She glanced up and a faint smile crossed his face.

"Devilish handsome girl," he remarked to the man behind him and then he passed out of her sight, perhaps forever.

"The woman with him?" cried Jane, her eyes following the beautiful creature at his side, "is she my mother?"

"No," said Graydon, averting his eyes to avoid her expression; "she is his wife."

Droom waited until the party was out of the restaurant before uttering a word.

"Inside of two years I have pointed out two fathers to their children—yours and his, Jane. Your mothers are dead. There isn't much choice as to fathers. If I were you, I'd say I had the better of the bargain. Take an old man's advice, both of you, and let bygones be bygones. Start life now, just as if nothing had happened before, and get every atom of happiness out of it that you can. Don't you two pay for the sins of your fathers."

"I couldn't live in New York if he were living here," murmured Jane.

"Hey, waiter, your bill," said Droom, with sudden harshness.

It was snowing and the wind was blowing a gale when they emerged from the place. Jane hung heavily upon Graydon's arm; he could feel that she was sobbing. He did not dare to look into her face, but he felt something cruelly triumphant surging in his heart. Elias

Droom waited until their cab came up. Then he offered his hand to both, hesitatingly, even timidly.

"Good-night. Be happy. There is nothing else left for you but that. Graydon, when you write to your father, give him my love."

CHAPTER XXXIII

DROOM TRIUMPHS OVER DEATH

Droom stood for a few moments in the hurtling snowstorm, abstractedly gazing toward Longacre Square. The chill in his marrow was not from the blizzard that swept down upon him; the gaunt grey look in his face was not that of hunger or want. There was fever in his brain and chill in his heart. He had forgotten Jane's trivial tragedy; his one overwhelming thought was of James Bansemer.

The heavy ulster was unbuttoned and the snowflakes pelted in against his neglected shirt front. A doorman called his attention to the oversight. He came to himself, drew the coat close about his long frame, and hurried off down Fifth Avenue. The storm was so vicious that he boarded a crosstown car at Forty-second Street. A man elbowed him in the narrow vestibule. He looked up and gasped aloud in sudden terror. An instant later he laughed at his fears; the man was not James Bansemer. A cold perspiration started out over his body, however. Through his brain there went racing the ever-revolving cry:

"He'll come straight to me—straight to me!"

The hour was not late, but the blizzard had driven the crowds from the streets. Eighth avenue sidewalks were deserted except for the people who were obliged to brave the storm. As Droom hurried south to his lodg-

ings he became possessed of a racking belief that someone was following close upon his heels—someone who was rushing up to deal him a murderous blow in the back. The old man actually broke into a frantic run in covering the last half block.

It was not until he was in his rooms, with the door bolted that he could rid himself of the dread. The fire had gone out and the light was low. His teeth chattered and his hand shook as he raised the wick in the lamp. The palsy of inexplicable fear was upon him. Kneeling before the stove he began to rebuild the fire. His back was toward the door and he turned an anxious face in that direction from time to time. Footsteps on the stairway sent a new chill through his gaunt frame. They passed on up the next flight, but he waited breathlessly until he heard the door of the apartment above slam noisily.

For half an hour he sat huddled in front of the stove without removing his hat and ulster.

"Curse the luck," he was saying over and over again to himself, sometimes aloud. "Why should he have a pardon? What are the laws for? Curse that meddling old fool Clegg! They'll set him free, and he'll hunt me out, I know he will. He won't forgive me for that day's work. He may be free now—it may have been he who followed me. But no! That's a silly thing to think. It takes weeks and months to get a pardon. Maybe—maybe they won't get it, after all."

He tried to throw off his desperate feeling of apprehension, chattering all sorts of comforting reasons and excuses to himself as he scurried about the rooms

with aimless haste. Try as he would, however, when the time came, he could not read—not even of his courage-inspiring Napoleon. The howl of the wind annoyed and appalled him; he caught himself listening intently for sounds above and not of the storm. A nervous, intermittent laugh broke from his lips as he went on cursing himself for a fool to be so disturbed by Graydon's report.

"What have I to fear from him? Why should I let that look of his unnerve me so? Why can't I forget it? It—it didn't mean anything. I'm a fool to think of it. Nearly two years ago, that was. Why, he may be——" A new thought chased the old one out before it was formed. His eyes caught sight of one of his completed models, standing in the corner. It was the model for the guillotine.

For a long time he sat staring at the thing, a hundred impressions forming and reforming in his brain.

"I wonder if I'll really die before he is liberated," he was saying dumbly to himself. "I wonder if I will. There's no sign of it now. I'm strong and well enough to live for years. Suppose he is freed inside of a month or two, what then? By Heaven, I'd be losing the dearest hope of my whole life. My last sight of him—that beautiful vision behind the bars—would be spoiled, undone, wiped out. He'd be as free as I. I won't die inside of a month, I'm sure. He'd come here and laugh at me and he'd kill me in the end. God! I know he would. He'd have the joy of seeing my pain and terror and defeat—he'd see me *last!* I'd be bloody and crushed and——"

He checked himself in the midst of these dire forebodings to rise suddenly and cross to the ghastly looking frame with the cords, the hinges, and the great broadaxe that lay harmlessly in the grooves at the top. For many minutes he stood and gazed at the axe, his flesh as cold as ice. Then he tested the cords. The axe dropped heavily to the block below. He smiled with cunning triumph at his own skill.

The odour of geranium leaves assailed his nostrils. With an ugly impulse he turned and swept the pots from the window box, scattering them over the floor.

"I'm in a devil of a humour," he laughed as he surveyed the wreck. "Something's gone wrong with me. I've never mistreated my flowers before." He lifted the broadaxe to its place, tenderly, almost lovingly. "By my soul, it's a beautiful piece of work. It's as sure as the grave itself."

Again he stood off and looked at the infernal bit of his own handiwork, his eyes glistening with dread of the thing. He turned and fled to the opposite side of the room, keeping his back toward the silent guillotine which seemed to be calling to him with mocking yet fascinating persistency.

"Curse the thing," he groaned. "Damn it, I didn't make it for my own use. What is the matter with me?" He glanced slyly, fearfully over his shoulder and then faced the thing deliberately, his jaws set, his eyes staring.

"It is a quick way—a sure way," he muttered. "I haven't anything to live for and but a few years at most. Nobody cares whether I live or die—not even

I. James Bansemer could not batter me down, as he surely will, if I——"

He crossed to an old chest and unlocked its lid with feverish haste. A bundle of papers came up in the grasp of his tense fingers. Casting dreadful glances at the insistent axe, he seated himself at the table and began looking over the papers.

"He won't take his father's rotten money, but he'll take mine. It's honest. It represents wages honestly, bitterly earned. There's more than twenty thousand to give him. He'll be surprised. Twenty thousand." He laid the first paper, his will drawn in favour of Graydon Bansemer, signed and addressed, upon the table, and then carelessly tossed the other documents into the chest. "By the Lord Harry, I'll have the best of James Bansemer yet. His boy will take my money even though he spurns his. God, I wish I could see him when he knows all this. It would be glorious."

He fingered the document for a tense moment, and then arose to remove his coat and vest. These he hung away in his closet with all his customary carefulness. In the middle of the room he stopped, his quivering face turned toward the gaunt thing of execution. His feet seemed nailed to the floor; his brain was urging him to go on with the horrid deed, his body was rebelling. The torture of terror was overpowering him.

Suddenly he found his strength of limb. With a guttural howl he clasped his hands to his eyes and fled blindly into his bedroom. Hurling his long, shivering frame upon the bed, he tried to shut out the enticing call of the thing of death. How long he quivered there,

shuddering and struggling, he could not have told. In the end—and as suddenly as he had fled—he leaped up and with a shrill laugh dashed back into the other room.

There was no hesitation in his body now. With a maniacal glee he rushed upon the devilish contrivance in the corner, tearing the axe from its place with ruthless hands. Throughout the building rang the sounds of smashing wood, furious blows of steel upon wood, and high above the din arose the laugh of Elias Droom. In two minutes, the guillotine lay in chips and splinters about the room—destroyed even as it was on the point of destroying him.

Dropping back against the wall, wet with perspiration, a triumphant grin upon his face, Elias surveyed the wreckage. His muscles relaxed and his eyes lost the dread that had filled them. The smile actually grew into an expression of sweetness and peace that his face had never known before.

As he staggered to a chair close by, a great sigh of relief broke from his lips.

"There!" he gasped. "It's over! it's over! My head is on my shoulders—it really is after all! It is not rolling into the corner—no! no! By my head—my own head, too—it was a close call for you, Elias Droom. Now, I'll take what comes. I'll wait for James Bansemer! I'll stick it out to the end. If he comes, he'll find me here. I've conquered the infernal death that stood waiting so long for me in that corner—and I never suspected it, either. God, how near it was to me! It stood there and waited for me to come. It knew

that I would come sooner or later! But I've smashed it—it's gone! It's not there!"

With eager hands he gathered up the pieces of wood and cast them into the stove. As the remains of that frightful minister of death crackled and spit with defeated venom, Elias Droom calmly pulled on his worn dressing gown, lighted his pipe and cocked his feet upon the stove rail, a serene look in his eyes, a chuckle in his throat.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TO-MORROW

Jane Cable, upon entering the cab, offered no resistance when Graydon drew her head over against his shoulder. His strong right hand clasped her listless fingers and the warmth of his heart came bounding into her veins as if by magic. He did not speak to her, but she knew that he was claiming her then for all time; she knew that nothing could stand in the way of his purpose. The sobs grew less despairing, her understanding of things less vague and uncertain. A few moments before she had felt that she was no kin to the world; now there was a new appreciation of love and its greatness in her soul.

This man had loved her, and he would take her up and shield her against the hate of the world. There had not been a moment when her own love for him wavered; she worshipped him now as she had in the beginning. The revelation of Droom, the theatric scénes in the café, the crushing of the small hope she had cherished, all conspired in this secure moment to waken her into a realisation of what an overbalancing power love is.

Unconsciously her fingers tightened upon his and her body drew closer; she was arraying herself against the fear that she might lose this haven of rest and joy, after all—the haven she had been willing to scourge

and destroy in the bitterness of her heart. A great wave of pity for herself came sweeping over her. It grew out of the dread that he might, after all, deny her the place that no one else in the world could give.

Graydon's cold face was suddenly illumined; the incomprehensible sweetness of pain rushed through his blood. He had given up his hope as blighted after the harsh hour with Droom; he could not believe his newfound success. Doubt, unbelief, enveloped him as he raised her head, a kiss crying for its kind. His arm crept behind her shoulders. She did not offer a repulse; her wet cheek touched his in submission. It was the first time his hungry arms had held her in centuries it seemed to him—and to her; it was the first time their lips had met—except in dreams—since that horrid night so long ago.

"Jane, Jane!" he was whispering in her ear; her plans, her purposes, her sacrifices, were running away from her in riotous disorder. She could not hold them in check; they fled like weaklings before the older and stronger hopes and desires.

They did not know of the blockade of cabs at the corner of Forty-second Street, nor how long they stood there. Shouting cabmen and police officers tried to rival the white blizzard in profuseness, but they did not hear them.

"Oh, Graydon, I cannot, I must not," she was crying, holding his hand with almost frenzied disdain for the words so plaintively loyal. "It is out of the question, dearest. You know it is. I love you, oh, how I love you. But I—I must not be your wife. I—I——"

"I've had enough of this, Jane," he said so firmly that she stiffened perceptibly in his arms. "It's all confounded rot. Excuse me, but it is. I know you think you're right, but you're not. Old Elias gave the best advice in the world. You know what it was. We've just got to make our own happiness. Nobody else will do it for us, and it's just as easy to be happy as it is to be the other way. I'm tired of pleading. I've waited as long as I intend to. We're going to be married to-morrow."

"Graydon!"

"Don't refuse! It's no use, dearest. We've lost a year or two. I don't intend to lose another day. What do I care about your father and mother? What did they care about you? You owe all the rest of your life to yourself and to me. Come! will you consent willingly or——" He paused. She was very still in his arms for a long time.

"I do so want to be happy," she said at last, reflectively. "No, no! don't say anything yet. I am only wondering how it will be after we've been married for a few years. When I'm growing old and plain, and you begin to tire of me as most men grow weary of their wives—what then? Ah, Graydon, I—I have thought about all that, too. You'll never reproach me openly—you couldn't do that, I know. But you may secretly nourish the scorn which——"

"Jane," he said, dropping the tone of confident authority and speaking very tenderly, "you forget that my father is a convict. You forget that he has done things which will forever keep me a beggar at

your feet. I am asking *you* to forget and overlook much more than you could ever ask of me. Old Elias, wretch that he is, has pointed out our ways for us; they run together in spite of what may conspire to divide them. Jane, I love my soul, but I love you ten thousand times better than my soul."

"I did not believe I could ever be so happy again," she murmured, putting her hands to his face.

"To-morrow, dear?"

"Yes."

Graydon, rejoicing in his final victory, hurried to his rooms later in the evening. As he was about to enter the elevator he noticed a grey-suited boy in brass buttons, who stood near by, an inquiring look in his face.

"This is Mr. Bansemer," observed the laconic youth who ran the single elevator in the apartment building.

"Something for me?" demanded Graydon, turning to the boy in grey.

"Special delivery letter, sir. Sign here."

Graydon took the thick envelope from the boy's hand. With a start, he recognised his father's handwriting. Curiously he turned the letter over in his fingers as he ascended in the car, wonder growing in his brain. He did not wait to remove his overcoat on entering his rooms, but strode to the light and nervously tore open the envelope. Dread, hope, anxiety, conspired to make his fingers tremble. There were many closely written pages. How well he remembered his father's writing!

As he read, his eyes grew wide with wonder and un-

belief. They raced through the pages, wonder giving way to joy and exultation as he neared the end of the astounding message from the far-away prisoner.

A shout forged to his lips; he hugged the letter to his heart; tears came into his eyes, a sob broke in his throat.

"Thank God!" he cried, throwing himself into a chair to eagerly read and reread the contents of the letter. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and dashed across the room to the telephone.

"She will die of joy!" he half sobbed, in the transports of exhilaration. Five minutes later he was on his way to her hotel, clutching the priceless letter in his bare fingers, deep down in his overcoat pocket. He had shouted over the 'phone that the good news would not keep till morning, and she was waiting up for him with Mr. and Mrs. Cable, consumed by curiosity.

"This letter"—he gasped, as he entered the room —"from father. He's written, Jane—everything. I knew he would. Elias didn't know it all. He knew half of the truth, that's all. Good Lord, I—I can't read it, Mr. Cable. You—please."

David Cable, white-faced and trembling, read aloud the letter from James Bansemer. It was to "My beloved son." The first appealing sentences were given to explanation and apology for the determined silence he had maintained for so many months. He spoke casually of his utter indifference to the success of certain friends who were working for his pardon. "If they secure my release," he wrote, "I shall find happiness if you clasp my hand but once before I leave Amer-

ica forever." Farther on he said: "I will not accept parole. It is a poor premium on virtue, and, as you know, my stock of that commodity has been miserably low."

"I may be required to serve my full term," read David Cable. "In that case, we should not see one another for years, my son. You have much to forgive and I have much more to forget. We can best see our ways to the end if we seek them apart. The dark places won't seem so black. . . . My sole purpose in writing this letter to you, my son, is to give back to you as much happiness as I can possibly extract from this pile of misery. I am not pleading for anything; I am simply surrendering to the good impulses that are once more coming into their own, after all these years of subjection. . . . I am not apologising to the Cables. I am doing this for your sake and for the girl who has wronged no one and to whom I have acted with a baseness which amazes me as I reflect upon it inside these narrow walls.

"You will recall that I would have permitted you to marry her—I mean, in the beginning. Perhaps it was spite which interposed later on. At least, be charitable enough to call it that. Clegg has been here to see me. He says you are bound to make Jane Cable your wife. I knew you would. For a long time I have held out, unreasonably, I admit, against having her as my daughter. I could not endure the thought of giving you up altogether. Don't you comprehend my thought? I cannot bring myself to look again into her eyes after what she saw in this accursed

prison. . . . She was born in wedlock. . . . The story is not a long one. Elias Droom knows the names of her father and mother, but I am confident that he does not know all of the circumstances. For once, I was too shrewd for him. The story of my dealings in connection with Jane Cable is a shameful one, and I cannot hope for pardon, either from you or from her."

Here he related, as concisely as possible, the incidents attending Mrs. Cable's first visit to his office and the subsequent adoption of the babe.

"I knew that there was wealth and power behind the mystery. There was a profitable scandal in the background. Unknown to Mrs. Cable, I began investigations of my own. She had made little or no effort to discover the parents of the child. She could have had no purpose in doing so, I'll admit. . . . [Here he gave in detail the progress of his investigations at the Foundlings' Home, at the health office, at certain unsavory hospitals and in other channels of possibility.] . . . At last, I found the doctor, and then the nurse. After that, it was easy to unearth the records of a child's birth and of a mother's death—all in New York City. . . . Droom can tell you the names of Jane's parents, substantiating the names I have just given to you. He did not know that they had been married nearly two years prior to the birth of the child. It was a clandestine marriage. . . . I went straight to the father of the foundling. He was then but little more than twenty-one years of age—a wild, ruthless, overbearing, heartless scoundrel, who had more money

but a much smaller conscience than I. . . . To-day he is a great and, I believe, respected gentleman, for he comes of good stock. . . . I had him trembling on his knees before me. He told me the truth. Egad, my son, I am rather proud of that hour with him.

"It seems that this young scion of a wealthy house had lost his insecure heart to the daughter of a real aristocrat. I say *real*, because her father was a pure Knickerbocker of the old school. He was, naturally, as poor as poverty itself. With his beautiful daughter he was living in lower New York—barely subsisting, I may say, on the meagre income that found its way to him through the upstairs lodgers in the old home. Here lived Jane's mother, cherishing the traditions of her blood, while her father, sick and feeble, brooded over the days when he was a king in Babylon. The handsome, wayward lover came into her life when she was nineteen. They were married secretly in the city of Boston.

"The young husband imposed silence until after he had attained his majority. There was a vast fortune at stake. In plain words, his father had forbidden the marriage. He had selected another one to be the wife of his son. . . . Jane was born in the second year of their wedded life. It was, of course, important that the fact should be kept secret. I am inclosing a slip of paper containing the names of the minister, the doctor and the nurse who afterwards attended her, together with the record of death. It is more convenient to handle than this bulky letter—which I trust you will destroy. You will also find the name of the

hospital in which Jane was born and where her mother died, ten days later. I may say, in this connection, that not one of the persons mentioned knew the true name of the young mother, nor were they sure of the fact that she was a wife. Her gravestone in the old cemetery bears the name of the maiden, not the wife. Her father never knew the truth. . . .

"What I did in the premises need not be told. That is a part of my past. I learned how the cowardly young father, glad to be out of the affair so easily, hired the nurse to leave the baby on the doorstep. Then I went to the banker whose son he was. I had absolute proof of the marriage. He paid me well to keep the true story from reaching the public. The son was whisked abroad and he afterwards married the girl of his father's choice. I do not believe that he has ever given a thought to the whereabouts or welfare of his child. It was her heritage of caste!

"If Jane cares to claim her rights as this man's lawful daughter, proof is ample and undeniable. I fancy, however, she will find greater joy as the daughter of David Cable. Her own father has less of a heart than yours, for, after all, my son, I love you because you are mine. Love me, if you can; I have nothing else left that I care for. Remember that I am always

Your loving father,

JAMES BANSEMER."

THE END